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# STORIES OF THE STRUGGLE

BY  
MORRIS WINCHEVSKY



CHICAGO  
CHARLES H. KERR & COMPANY  
1908

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## CONTENTS

WHY HE DID IT . . . . .	I
GRISHKA'S ROMANCE . . . . .	19
MARTINELLI'S MARRIAGE . . . . .	31
HE, SHE AND IT . . . . .	44
COMMUNISM A FAILURE . . . . .	55
THE GROWLING EDITOR . . . . .	66
THE KNOUT AND THE FOG . . . . .	73
MALEK'S FRIEND . . . . .	82
CRANKY OLD IKE . . . . .	95
THE PRICE OF FREEDOM . . . . .	106
THE MAN LAZY ON PRINCIPLE . . . . .	113
ECK-KE . . . . .	122
ELIAKUM ZUNSER . . . . .	129
THE BLUES VERSUS THE REDS . . . . .	139
A PERSEVERING WOMAN . . . . .	149



## NOTE

Of the stories included in this little volume five were published in England. They were: "Grishka's Romance" (in the London Sun), "The Knout and the Fog" and "The Man Lazy on Principle" (in Justice), and "Cranky Old Ike" and "He, She and It" (in the Social Democrat).

Considerably altered and enlarged, the first-named story was afterwards republished in the illustrated New York monthly, The Comrade, while "Cranky Old Ike" was in this country reprinted in the Worker.

"Why He Did It" and "The Blues vs. the Reds" were specially written for The Comrade.

The character sketch "Eliakum Zunser" appeared in The Era, a magazine devoted to Jewish life and literature, while "Eck-Ke," also a sketch from life, is now published for the first time. So, too, is "A Persevering Woman."

## NOTE

“Martinelli’s Marriage” and “The Growling Editor” were first published in The Social Democratic Herald, then in Chicago, and reprinted in the London Social Democrat, the monthly magazine of the S. D. F. mentioned above.

The New York “Worker” first printed “Communism a Failure” and “Malek’s Friend.”

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The incidents in every one of the stories, at least in those which are stories in the full sense of the word, have really taken place, and are, therefore, illustrative of the unwritten history of the great struggle for freedom and equality now going on all over the world. “Behind the Scenes in the Socialist Movement” would in a sense have aptly described them.

M. W.

NEW YORK, March 3, 1908.

# STORIES OF THE STRUGGLE

WHY HE DID IT

(1901)

Dr. Binsky's spacious parlor on East Broadway was the scene of a very animated discussion one Sunday evening a few months ago. Besides several brother-physicians, attracted, I am afraid, less by the fame of their confrère than by the really charming personality of his youthful and cultured spouse, there were on that occasion a couple of journalists off duty, some married and unmarried ladies, all, needless to say, as young as possible, and a fair sprinkling of lawyers, successful and otherwise. As is always the case among what you might call the Upper 400 on the Lower East Side, everybody talked Russian, had

Darwin and Spencer at his or her finger's tips, and a good deal to say about Gorki, the last Grand Opera season, and the prospective yacht-race, though in a much lesser degree.

But nobody said it, like the rest of the world, they had little or no thought for anything except the Buffalo tragedy. The gloom which pervaded the country was visible more or less on every countenance, particularly among those of the guests who were either avowed anarchists or to some extent in sympathy with the anarchist philosophy. Not even the appearance on the table of the samovar, the genuine article, if you please, the one thing every man and woman born on Russian soil either loves or affects to love, could do aught to mitigate the prevailing depression.

For a moment, and for one only, was there something like a mirthful breeze in that evening's heavy atmosphere. It was caused by an innocent remark of Mrs. Binsky's pretty little daughter, a child about four years old, who, upon hearing the name of the dead president mentioned, wanted

to know whether or not "Mr. Bryan did it."

In the course of the conversation nearly every case in history bearing some sort of resemblance to the one in question was gone through. The story of Sisera and Jael was hinted at by a gentleman well versed in Bible lore, and, not finding any acceptance, owing to its palpable irrelevance, at once gave way to a consideration of other incidents in the records of the past. But neither the story of Tell, nor the tragic end of Cæsar, nor that of Marat, nor the assassination of Alexander II., of King Humbert, nor any other case of that nature seemed analogous enough to throw the least light on the matter under discussion.

"It's no use talking," said one of the lawyers, laconically summing up the case, "the thing is simply unaccountable."

"Yes, absolutely unaccountable!" the hostess chimed in, and the counsellor's opinion was accepted "*nemine contradicente*."

At this point an elderly man came into the parlor from the adjoining room, where he had been sitting on the couch and smok-

ing and studying the ceiling, evidently undesirous to take any part in what he must have considered a fruitless talk. As he took a seat by the table, he looked like one just arisen from a long sleep, who had dreamed of something, and felt like telling it.

“I am afraid, you are wrong,” said he, addressing the lady of the house, who, without consulting his wishes, had meanwhile filled and placed before him a glass of tea with lemon — “the thing is perfectly accountable, provided you start from the right premises. With you the only alternative seems to be: crazy or criminal, and that is where you are all wrong. Not that the man may not be either the one or the other, or both. But your theory besides being purely hypothetical, is, from a psychological point of view, entirely worthless. Whether you call it crime or madness, the question still remains, what was it that led the man to do it? Now, to give a satisfactory answer, even to attempt to do so, one would have to know a great deal more about the perpetrator of that deed than

what can be learned from the papers, and I don't. How should I, seeing that even the anarchists disclaim all knowledge of him. However, I know of a parallel case which might throw some light on this mystery. It is a pretty long story. Would you have the patience to hear it?"

Most of those present now found they had some very pressing engagements elsewhere. They anticipated a very long talk, and our friend was by no means a popular talker. Those, however, of us who stayed to the end certainly had no reason to consider their attention ill bestowed.

Here is his story slightly boiled down.

As you all know, the beginning of the terrorist movement in Russia coincided with the increasing persecution of the socialists in Germany as a result of the Coercion Act passed by the Reichstag in the fall of 1878 at the instance of Prince Bismark. Italy and Austria, anxious not to be behindhand in this matter, naturally followed suit, without having recourse to any special legislation, their existing laws proving severe enough. As a consequence of such a state

of affairs, France and Switzerland, and, above all, England, were daily receiving "reds" as fugitives from those other countries.

I, at that time, lived in Paris, and there frequently visited the international socialist gathering-place on Rue d'Arbre Sec. The German element predominating, most of the lectures were delivered in that language.

One Saturday night we had what you might call a rare treat. A charming Russian young lady, a medical student from the Sorbonne, gave us in as good German as could be desired a discourse on "Woman under Socialism." In spite of her rather faulty delivery she produced a great impression, and was voted, with one dissentient voice, a success by acclamation. That one "non-content" was a young man, decidedly good looking, well built, with a southern temper and a northern complexion. His nationality was a mystery then as afterwards. The fair lecturer had no sooner sat down than he rose, or rather jumped to his feet, and in the guise of a question roundly abused her. According to him she had been



talking the rankest moonshine, was nothing but one of those milk-and-water socialists, who fooled themselves and others with the absurd notion, that a social revolution could be carried out by means of corrupt ballots. The chairman being more or less in sympathy with the young "questioner's" views (he had been expelled from his native Berlin under the "minor state of siege" then recently proclaimed by the Fatherland) the speaker went on in that strain for quite a while, his fire and fury increasing in volume all the time. Having most emphatically declared that the lecturer was nothing but a mere woman after all, he resumed his seat amid some applause.

A lively debate ensued. When all was over, the two young people came dangerously near quarreling, a contingency which was only averted by the lady suddenly putting on her things, and leaving the hall, escorted by one of the Russian male students there present.

I would fain dwell a little longer on what is to follow, but, not to try your patience too much, I will just say that, as is not infre-

quently the case, the altercation of that evening soon led to as romantic an "intrigue" as ever was concocted by the impudent winged little rascal we have all of us known, mostly to our sorrow.

The day after the encounter the young man felt he had been more than unduly harsh in his attack on the young lady. He had to go and apologise, he certainly could do no less, oh, no! He made up his mind to try and meet her at the entrance of the Sorbonne as she was leaving, after her studies, but more than a week passed by without his succeeding in catching a glimpse of her. One way or another he finally learned that she was ill, and would not come back to college very soon.

While Peter (that is what we shall call him, though it was not his name) was in this plight, Agnes (by which name I shall henceforth let the young lady go) received a letter from Russia containing a piece of bad news. Her favorite brother, a student at the Moscow university, had been arrested in connection with some rather serious political affairs, and . . . well, you can

easily imagine the rest. It was this piece of intelligence which had so upset her as to render her too ill to go on with her studies.

After the lapse of some weeks, perhaps months, I would not be certain, Peter at last succeeded in finding out her whereabouts, and one day timidly knocked at her door. To his great surprise she received him not only kindly, but even cordially, and as he stammered his excuses she interrupted him with the remark:

“You were quite right. I talked like a goose, and I know better now. The ruling classes are bent on violence, and they shall have all they want.”

Peter was amazed. The girl was entirely changed. The conversation which followed revealed the reason for her transformation, as he inwardly called it; the trouble into which her brother had been plunged was at the bottom of it all.

He went away from her elated. As a full-fledged revolutionist, Agnes appeared to him head and shoulders above all women he had ever met. She was simply perfect, and in spite of the unqualified forgiveness

she had just extended to him, he could have torn his tongue out for the brutality he had displayed toward her that night at the *reunion*.

As time wore on they met more and more often.

Meanwhile his reputation in the socialist circles grew. He often took part in the discussions on Rue d'Arbre Sec, where his eloquence came to be universally recognized. One day he delivered a lecture, taking for his subject, "The Degeneracy of the Social Democracy in Germany." He went for Bebel and Liebknecht in a manner that would have gladdened the heart of old Bakunin himself. Nothing more violent was heard from the platform of that meeting-place. Nothing so violent was so splendidly phrased.

All the time the speech was in progress Agnes' face was a study worthy the attention of a great painter. It attracted, however, only that of a single individual, a dark-eyed, ill-favored man, about five years her senior, who had evidently come to the meeting with the set purpose of observing

her. When the meeting was over, and he saw Agnes going out of the hall on the arm of Peter, his mind was made up. They were in love with each other.

A few days after this, Peter's lecture came up for discussion at the dinner table in Slavsky's Polish restaurant. Agnes, who was present, made no attempt to conceal her gratification at the praise so generously and generally given to Peter's spirited discourse. At the same time she could not help noticing that the individual just mentioned was busy whispering to a lady she did not know, while occasionally glancing at herself in a mysterious sort of way.

She was on the point of leaving the house, having just settled her bill, when the following phrase, venomously pronounced, struck her ear:

"Not everybody who talks revolution is a revolutionist. In France, more than anywhere else, there is such a thing as an *agent provocateur*."

Without knowing why, Agnes felt stung to the quick.

In the evening Peter came to see her. She

received him in a way that made him feel very happy and at the same time a little perplexed. There was an unusual amount of ostentation about her manner, a kind of exaggeration in her protestations of friendship in which he thought he could detect something like a false note. She looked a little pale, too.

"Is anything the matter with you?" he asked her.

"Nothing," she said after a moment's hesitation, "I have a slight headache."

He proposed a walk. The fresh air would do her good. She thought so too, and they went.

They reached the Rue de Rivoli, and started to walk toward the Louvre along that busy thoroughfare.

A number of things were discussed as they strolled along, and Victor Hugo's "History of a Crime" having been touched upon by Agnes, the conversation which had hitherto lacked spirit, became more like what a talk naturally should be among true dwellers of the Latin Quarter. At this point, however, an incident occurred which,

while insignificant in itself, tended to put a damper on the animated discussion of the two young people.

A well-dressed man had passed them by, walking in the opposite direction, had raised his hat, and exchanged a friendly nod with Peter. Agnes stole a glance at her companion, and he appeared to her somewhat confused. She was, of course, delicate enough to ask no questions, and, as Peter did not volunteer any explanation, she made an effort to resume the "History of a Crime," but without avail. A noise of some kind, coming from a Café close by, engaged their attention for a while, and, that over, they both agreed it was time they crossed the river to the South, so that Agnes might go home.

"Strange! He never told me who that man was," she almost audibly said to herself as she was getting ready for her night's rest.

She tossed about in bed for a long time, unable to go off to sleep. She recalled the man's searching look, and military gait, and the more she brooded over it all, the more

she felt convinced that Peter was acquainted with some queer people.

In the morning she got up greatly out of sorts, having spent a very restless night.

\* \* \*

In the spring of 1880 a free fight took place in the hall in the Rue d'Arbre Sec after one of the usual weekly lectures. I have never been able to ascertain the real cause of it. There was a rumor to the effect that an agent of the secret police, in the guise of a red-hot revolutionist, had started the whole affair. But whatever the cause, the result was disastrous. Some half-dozen of us were arrested on the spot, and a week or so afterward expelled, as foreigners, from France. Agnes and myself, the most innocent of all, were among the number.

Peter's absence on that occasion struck all of us as, to say the least, very peculiar.

On the second of April we landed in England. In London we all joined the Communist Workingmen's Educational Club. With a few exceptions the members were all Germans, so that our ignorance of the



English language hardly bothered us. Agnes became a general favorite.

Exactly what her relations with Peter were at that time has never transpired. When, however, he joined us in London, and it was noticed that Agnes not only never came to the Club or left it in his company, but very rarely put in an appearance at all, it became pretty evident that a "rupture" must have taken place.

Not to weary you with too many details, I will just say that the more people in London saw of Peter or heard of him in public, the more Agnes was praised for keeping aloof from him. And as his speeches grew in violence just in proportion as the general distrust toward him became more and more palpable to him, that same violence of language went on increasing in intensity and volubility. Thus his desire to prove himself sincere only tended to convince everybody else of the contrary, and, then, as he came to realize it more and more fully, and, owing to that very fact his face and manner with further effort betrayed more and more a kind of uncomfortable feeling,

the verdict: "guilty" was universally agreed upon. It was deferred solely because there was, after all, no direct evidence to justify its promulgation.

To the chain of circumstantial evidence the last and most important link was added. In the fall of the same year a letter was received from Germany conveying the startling intelligence that a man who had been the steward of the Club, and had left England to claim an inheritance in Hamburg, was arrested in that city promptly on his arrival. It being known that Peter lodged with him, there no longer seemed to be any room for doubt, and he was given to understand that his room was preferable to his company in the Club and elsewhere.

Meanwhile his passion for Agnes fairly devoured him. She now treated him with open contempt, and, as time wore on he became mentally and physically a ruined man.

After a lapse of several months, during which he almost seemed to avoid her, Peter one evening madly rushed into her room.

Without waiting for any explanation on his part, Agnes told him to go.

"I am going," he said, "did not come to stay —" He stopped as if to regain his breath, and then ejaculated in a manner that horrified the girl:

"I will prove to you, Agnes, that I am the only true man in your whole crowd." Thereupon he slammed the door, and went away.

For the space of a year or so he disappeared from the surface, but our new steward, having one day run across him on the street, declared that he looked like a perfect maniac.

All the time the Fenian outrages, as they were called, were increasing in fury, terribly agitating the public mind, and finally culminated in the assassination of Cavendish and Burke in Dublin. Shortly afterward a young man attempted to kill a member of the royal family, and was consigned to a lunatic asylum without much ado.

"Tell her, I'm not a spy!" he muttered as he was caught, which was all that was ever got out of him.

Needless to say the young man was Peter.

\* \* \*

Turning to Mrs. Binsky, our friend added:

“Some day it will be found that this is what was the matter with the assassin of the President, this or something like it. Anyway, ‘unaccountable’ is a very foolish word, Madam.

## GRISHKA'S ROMANCE

(1893)

It goes without saying that a genuine Russian military uniform in an East End Jewish "cookshop" in London was then, and would probably be even now, a remarkable phenomenon. When, therefore, I found on entering, one bleak, rainy evening in the fall of 1883, Mr. Levey's Mansell street establishment — as famous, by the way, for its pickled cucumbers as for its chess devotees — all eyes intently fixed on Grishka, I was not at all surprised.

He was a tall, tanned-faced, gray-eyed, shrewd-looking, clean-shaven specimen of Russian-Jewish humanity. From time to time there was on his face a kind of melancholy smile which, accompanied by a nervous twitch of the lips, no sooner made its appearance than it was subdued, as if circumstances did not warrant it. A cursory

glance sufficed to tell the least observant that the heart of the late "Private of Infantry" harbored a great sorrow.

The chess board was deserted. A black king and a white bishop were afterward discovered in a mutilated condition under the table. The cat had it all her own way in the kitchen, while Solomon Fiddle, who had the reputation of incessantly "smoking like a chimney," had rolled a paper cigarette and applied it to his nether lip, with the evident intention of getting out his tongue, so as to moisten the paper edge, but was too absorbed in what was going on to finish the job in hand.

Grishka had apparently been talking for some time when I came into the old, dingy dining-room. He seemed to have begun his narrative in a reluctant, indolent manner, for he was getting more and more animated as he was proceeding.

Who was Grunya? — he said. — You will see presently.

Our regiment was transferred to Wilna. We were billeted with the house-holders.

They were either Poles or Lithuanians, or Jews. Russians? Hardly any. It was my good fortune to get into a house on Savitch street, a second-floor flat, the private residence of a well-to-do Jewish shop-keeper. He was, as I subsequently learned, a widower, whose son was in St. Petersburg, studying medicine, while his daughter was staying at home, keeping house for him. She, at that time barely out of her teens, was amiable, though not exactly beautiful, brave enough to face Osman Pasha at Plevna, and as kind-hearted as any sister of mercy in Lithuania. Her name was Grunya.

At first she fought shy of me. I noticed she was always hiding the things she was reading at my approach. I might have been a spy, you know. But that did not last long. By inadvertance she one evening left on the table in the sitting-room a printed sheet on which there was a little revolutionary song. I read it. It sent a thrill right through me. I thought it the most blood-thirsty thing ever written. This is how it ran:

“Hail the cutler, lads.  
Who three knives made, lads —  
    Glory!  
And the first good blade  
Priests to kill he made —  
    Glory!  
Then the sharks of trade  
Slays the second blade —  
    Glory!  
While, our prayers heard,  
Lays low our Czar the third —  
    Glory!

As I read it for the second time, she came in. The brave little woman gazed at me and said nothing. I, too, was silent. I gave her the paper, which she hid. What she read in my face I don't know, but she evidently made up her mind that whatever my opinions, I was not likely to betray her.

After this she never again distrusted me, without exactly taking me into her confidence. I still was to her the soldier billeted in the house, a sort of unbidden guest who, as the saying goes, “is worse than a Tartar.”

This state of affairs one day underwent a



sudden change. It happened in the following manner:

Pipe in mouth I had been sitting for an hour or so by the window, looking out into the street. All at once I jumped up, made for her bedroom, where I was sure she had some Socialist leaflets and booklets in a bureau. Full of amazement she saw me rush out of her room, all the while excitedly stuffing the bosom pockets of my shinel\* with her "literature." Without giving her time to recover from her astonishment I snatched out of her hand a pamphlet she had been reading. She was on the point of making some angry remark when the door was unceremoniously opened on the outside. I had resumed my seat by the window, and the District Police Commissioner walked in, leaving the door ajar. In the hall there were three desyatniks.†

He saluted Grunya with a few words of mock politeness, and then proceeded to search the house. With the bunch of keys

\* Overcoat.

† Constables.

in her hand, she followed him through every part of the place, unlocking, at his command, every drawer, box or closet, all of which he could not have examined more thoroughly had he been after some hidden treasure. Presently I heard voices in her bedroom. I got up and stationed myself near the door. I was afraid I might not have cleared out everything after all. The wardrobe was first opened, then the bureau. Every bit of clothing was minutely searched, pockets being turned out, and the lining examined. That done, he pulled the cases off the pillows, felt all the mattresses, lifted from the floor carpets and rugs, and surveyed the walls. Empty-handed he came into the sitting-room where I was. On a shelf there were some books. He took them up one by one, carefully turning the leaves, and in the case of the books that were bound, looking into the backs as he opened them in the middle and flattened them out. Having raised all the pictures on the walls, he satisfied himself that he had come on a fool's errand, and looked rather sheepish.

At this point I could not help noticing a

change in his manner. His politeness toward her had become perceptibly more sincere, his face assuming a kinder expression. After a while I saw Grunya turn pale at something he whispered to her. She stood aghast for a moment. Then she gave him a curt reply which nearly upset him. At once his face resumed its habitual officially-rigorous expression and, as he turned toward the constables in the doorway, he gave them to understand that there was no occasion for staying any longer in the house.

He was almost on the threshold when he retraced his steps and came up to Grunya. With an evil-portending smile he said he had reason to suspect that she had some papers concealed under her bodice.

"I am sorry," he said, "to be under the necessity of asking you —"

I flared up in an instant.

"She will do nothing of the kind," I thundered, "not while I am here, at any rate! Be off, sir! You may get me into Catorga‡ for the remainder of my life, but this young lady will not be insulted if I can

‡ Penal servitude in Siberian mines.

prevent it. So make haste and be off!"

I suppose he knew right well that the dirty thing he suggested was illegal, so he said nothing beyond asking for pen, ink and paper, which I gave him myself. He then took a seat at the table, drew up a protocol, setting down my name, my regiment, and, no doubt, my offence. As he got up and was about to depart he said to me in a tone of affected coolness:

"All this, my fine young man, will be made known to the proper authorities. Ye-es! Good-bye!"

He was gone.

Grunya and I stood facing one another. Her gaze was too much for me. I have faced death more than once in the war with Turkey, but Grunya's look unnerved me. But I no sooner sat down than I felt her delicate arms around my neck and a hearty kiss on my forehead.

Several days elapsed. One morning, as I was amusing myself by scribbling something on a scrap of paper Grunya took a seat beside me.

"You must tell me something about your life, Grisha," she said.

So she called me Grisha! Me, who never was anything but Grishka\* since I was enlisted in the army.

I tried to get out of it. What was there in my life worth telling? But she insisted, and I told her all I could think of in a rambling sort of way. How she listened! Everything I related seemed to have for her an interest bordering on fascination. She spoke very little on that as on subsequent occasions. When she did talk at all it was for the purpose of imparting to me some knowledge which she invariably did without in the least displaying her intellectual superiority. At times she would get me to talk about the people and the way they lived, and would prophesy great things to come.

While talking in this strain she once abruptly asked me:

"Say, Grisha, supposing the people revolted, and you were told to shoot them down?"

The thought never occurred to me before.

\* The contemptuous form for Grigori.

I did not, however, hesitate in my answer, and it seemed to make her very happy.

One evening we went out together for a stroll. On German street Grunya met lots of young men of her acquaintance. She hardly noticed them. After a while she said she felt very tired. She took my arm. As she leant on it she trembled all over. I glanced at her from aside. What may be the matter with the darling? I thought.

"I am all right, my friend," she said, as if she had heard me ask the question.

The following morning she got up later than usual. I felt very restless on that account. The time seemed to drag on in a dreadful manner. At length she came into the dining-room. As she greeted me I thought I had a different person before me. She was coldly polite, and there was not a vestige of friendliness in her demeanor toward me.

She sent out the housemaid to make some purchases, and then turned to me.

"Grigori Abramovitch," she said.

I was stung to the quick. It was the first

time she had addressed me in that formal way. How could I have offended her? I thought.

"You said last night," she went on, "your regiment was about to start from here in a few days —"

She stopped short as if out of breath, and then continued:

"When you will be gone I shall heed no dangers — If they come again I wouldn't care whether they took me or not — We may meet again. If we do, you must promise to be —"

"Your faithful servant, Grushenka," I said, "ready to go through flames and torrents for your sake, dear soul! You are so delicate, child, so sensitive, brave though you be. You want a fellow like me to serve and follow you like a —"

"Don't, Grisha, don't say that," she interrupted me. "I need no servant — Here, take this to remember me by."

With that she pulled a ring off the forefinger of her right hand and put it on my smallest finger. She embraced me, and as our lips met for the first and last time, she

sobbed in a way to break the stoutest heart.

\* \* \*

Grishka stopped. Somebody reached him a tumblerful of water, and he took a sip. He then proceeded with his story in short, crude sentences, as one who being exhausted, is anxious to be through with his tale.

In Toula, he said, I learned that she had got arrested a few weeks after I left Wilna. I procured civilian clothes. They did not fit, but served my purpose. I packed up my uniform and bolted. She once said she might come to this free country. So here am I. Have been for some time. Who knows? She may escape and come here. Am studying and reading all I can — for her sake. I always go to the Hamburg docks whenever a steamer is due. May meet her some day. Yesterday I got drenched in the rain. Had to wait five hours. Never mind that. Would any of you like to see her ring? Here it is.

As he showed it to us two big tears stood in his eyes, and not in his alone.



## MARTINELLI'S MARRIAGE

(1899)

Everybody in our circle knew Martinelli, but very few knew the great event of his life. That is why only those few understood him. There being no longer any harm in divulging his secret, I propose to let you all into it without much further ado.

As his name would sufficiently indicate, Martinelli was an Italian. Towards the beginning of the eighties he had settled in the northwestern part of that monster town which is so fatal to despotism, weak lungs and architectural symmetry, under the name of London.

It was in the old Communist Workingmen's Educational Club, then located in Rose Street, Soho Square, and founded in 1849 by Marx and Engels, that I made his acquaintance. He was a tall, broad-shouldered, well-proportioned man, 32 years old,

the owner of the most expressive black eyes, in the Club, and of a moustache which could not be duplicated very easily anywhere outside a French military haunt.

He came to London from Switzerland, where he had studied medicine, practised Socialism, offended against the law, and was expelled nominally on account of a row in which he had got involved, but in reality because he was a Socialist who obtruded his ideas on the people, much to the chagrin of the peace-loving philistine.

Thanks to his great linguistic attainments, he soon succeeded in getting, or rather in giving, a good many lessons. Were it not for his love of luxuries which went to the length of actually possessing a piano — an unheard of thing among bachelors in our midst in those days — he would have been able to live pretty comfortably, and to present a respectable appearance in the matter of dress. As it was, he was always hard up, and sartorially what a feminine cockney of the leisured class would have called a "fright." His overcoat, a garment ever on duty during all the four

seasons of the year, looked as if it had never known better days, was several inches shorter than his frock-coat, and just a shade less shabby; while his trousers, undersized, threadbare and terribly baggy at the knees, seemed to be longing for the cast-off clothes heap, their last resting place, and possibly, also, their original home.

I feel greatly tempted to describe his other articles of apparel, but space and a sense of proportion forbid it. The truth is that I only mention them on account of their close association to a fact, soon to be stated, which forms the key-note of the whole narrative.

Martinelli's negligence in dressing was due not so much to atrophy of the purse, as to the circumstance that he had gradually developed into a confirmed woman-hater. A persistent rumor was current among us to the effect that the Italian, while still in his native country, had fallen in love with a charming young lady, had been rejected, and, like many others, in a similar plight, had resolved never, never again to have anything more to do with the fair but cruel sex. . . .

One summer evening in 1881 or 1882, I forget which, a miracle occurred. On the lounge in Martinelli's "parlor"—he occupied a suite of two rooms, the other one serving as a combined library and bed-room—was seated a real woman, and a young one, to boot. It is true she was there in the company of her brother; all the same the thing was unprecedented in the annals of the Italian's domestic establishment, and would probably not have been credited on anything short of an affidavit by a trusted eye-witness.

And yet there she was, as large as life, an unmistakable daughter of Eve, flaxen-haired, blue-eyed, as pretty as any girl with a propensity to higher mental culture ordinarily need be, and distinguished by that kind of sad, shrewd expression in the face which you may have met with in the "better class" of Irish womanhood.

Olga, however, did not hail from the Emerald Isle. She was a Russian, a native of the South of that country, as was, needless to say, her big, rather plain-faced, strongly-built elder brother, who had chap-

eroned her into the enemy's dominions.

On the table, which looked unusually tidy and almost clean on that occasion, there stood a bottle containing some liquor, which I will not presume to specify, being, as a temperance man, seldom able to tell with any degree of certainty, cider from champagne. In the vicinity of the bottle there was an oblong half-empty paper box of cigarettes to which the two young men applied themselves at very frequent intervals.

After a pretty long talk embracing a great variety of subjects—a talk which every now and then became so very animated, that the two young men spoke against time and each other—they reached the question of matrimony. That seemed to have reminded Belsky, Olga's brother, of something, and he suddenly jumped up from his seat, and said:

“I say, Martinelli! Come with me into your bed-room. I'd like to have a word with you in private.”

And turning to his sister, he added:

“Olga, my soul, sit down at the piano, and while away as best you can, the next

ten minutes. But, say! Don't go in for anything Wagnerian; we shall want to hear each other speak."

As she answered, saying something which Martinelli took to be the nearest approach to the English "All right!" in Russian, he realised that he had for the first time properly looked at her, as well as heard her not at all unmelodious voice.

When the two young men were alone in the book-lined bed-room, Belsky lit a fresh cigarette, and sitting down opposite the Italian, he blurted out the question:

"How old are you, Martinelli?"

The Italian was somewhat taken aback by the interrogation.

"Thirty-two," he said. "Why?"

"Never mind why," said the Russian, "just tell me something else. Are you still as firmly as ever resolved to remain single all your life?"

"What makes you ask me? But of course I am."

"Listen. Do you mean to say that you will never, absolutely never marry?"

"You are getting tiresome, my friend.

You ought to know me by this time, and I should not have to inform you, of all men in the world, that I shun petticoats as I would the devil —”

“Not so loud,” Belsky interrupted him. “My sister can hear you.” The Italian looked annoyed, and said in an undertone:

“I could almost hate you for bringing her here. You might have known better.”

“I trust you will have patience with me, for I mean to go a little further in my questioning.”

“Then do it quick, and let us change the subject.”

“Listen. What guarantee have you against meeting one of these fine days a woman who will by force of — who will, in short, set to naught all your resolutions?”

“I am love-proof, my lad,” said Martinelli, a smile playing on his lips for the first time that evening.

“I think, I understand,” said Belsky, also smiling, “but I would not be prying into your secrets. Anyhow, you are certain that the blind little trickster will never come near your heart? Are you?”

"You are becoming a most intolerable nuisance! How many times shall I tell you that such a thing as marriage, or love, is utterly out of the question in my case!"

"Keep your wool on, my boy! I am glad to hear you say so. It proves to me that I really knocked at the right door."

Belsky took a puff at his cigarette, and then said in measured tones, pronouncing with studied distinctness each and every syllable:

"Now, then, since you are so very certain that you will forever remain a bachelor, do me a favor and marry my sister."

Martinelli burst out laughing; his whole body was convulsed, and one of the last three buttons on his waistcoat jumped off with a bound, and vanished behind a volume of history on the opposite shelf. He had not laughed like that for years. He was almost hysterical.

When Belsky at last saw his friend in his normal state again, he turned to him and said:

"Come, come! I beg of you, don't laugh. The matter is very serious. Be-



sides you misunderstand me entirely. I do not wish to saddle you with a wife —."

"No one can, my dear boy."

"Don't interrupt me. I am not such a fool — Drunk? No. Not that either. All I want you to do is to marry my sister both at the Italian consul's, and in church. Keep quiet, will you? We can procure a special licence which will enable you to become her legal husband in three days. At the consul's things may get protracted a few days more, but everything could be settled inside of a week. Now, don't stare at me as if I were mad. I will explain it to you."

Belsky tried to take another whiff, but his cigarette being extinguished, he gave it up, and proceeded as follows:

"Listen. Eight years ago Olga left Russia to avoid certain deportation to Siberia. She, then sixteen years old, had committed the terrible crime of allowing a locally well-known Nihilist to use her address for receiving letters by mail from St. Petersburg. She came to Switzerland, studied at Berne, while you were at Zurich, and is now a full-fledged M. D. She must

go back to Russia where she will have to pass another examination and settle down somewhere as a physician. She may not do that either. It all depends—Give us a light, will you? So. Thanks. It all depends. Anyhow, go she must, and for a reason which I am not at liberty to state, apart from her old offence, she cannot go to Russia under her own name, and will only be safe as Signora Martinelli. As such she can in case of need appeal to the Italian Ambassador. In short, you must go through the ceremony of marriage for the sake of— I must say no more. Well?

Martinelli walked silently up and down the room a few times, then he said:

“But supposing she wishes to get married, what then?”

“Why, she destroys the marriage certificate, and becomes Miss Olga Belsky once more.”

“And further, supposing”—Martinelli, went on half grinning, half smiling—“I come and assert my rights?”

“You will never know where she is as

long as you live. You won't see me again, either."

After a few moments' pause the Italian came up to Belsky and said:

"I think I will do it."

And he did. . . .

About a week elapsed since the conversation above recorded had taken place. At Liverpool Street Station in London a small group of people had assembled around Olga Belsky and her brother. The train was to leave for Harwich at 8 o'clock. It was about half past 7.

"Do you think Martinelli will come to say good-bye to me?" said Olga, turning to her brother.

The young man shook his head, and she went on:

"I never saw such a bear in all my born days. He was as kind to me as possible. He provided me with every comfort during the whole week. He put both his rooms at my disposal, himself sleeping out. He never came to the house but to bring

something he fancied I might need. And all the time he hardly looked at me, and only once wished me good-morning."

Belsky was on the point of making some remarks when Martinelli appeared on the scene. He, however, no sooner espied Olga than he found he wanted an evening paper. The newstand was close at hand, but it took him quite a while to get what he needed, and when he at last came back, Olga was already on the train, taking leave of her friends, and shaking hands with them through the open window of the compartment.

The train was to start in a few minutes and the guard locked the door. At that moment Martinelli, looking like one just aroused from his sleep, hurried up to Olga, took her hand, bowed, and before she could utter a word, disappeared.

Then the train went off, and the little group dispersed. . . .

I met him again some four or five years later, in the fall of 1886.

The man had undergone a complete

transformation. He looked ghastly pale, the lustre had gone from his eyes, his tall figure was bent, and his outward appearance even more neglected than years ago.

It was at his house that I saw him. We spent a few hours together, had a long conversation, in which he participated only to the extent of saying "yes" or "no."

I was on the point of going. He beckoned me to a chair, sat down at the piano and played a mournful Russian tune. His rendering was so peculiarly touching, that I was moved to tears.

I opened the door to go.

"Stay a minute!" said he. "Do you remember that little meeting at Liverpool Street Station, when — she left?"

"By the way," said I, "did you ever hear from her?"

"No," said he, "and — just fancy! I have loved her madly ever since." And he sobbed like a child.

# HE, SHE AND IT

(1905)

## I

He was leaning against It.

He was an old scavenger, a kind of superannuated biped. It was an old apple-tree.

Who was She?

Never mind.

The dense, murky, smoky, suffocating fog that had darkened the sky, and poisoned the air, and saddened every human heart, was gone at last.

Good riddance. Men, women, and children, now breathed a little more freely in modern Babylon. The London autumn resumed its ordinary dismal look. Cabs, carriages and omnibuses, or rather, since you insist on precision of nomenclature, 'ansoms, four-wheelers, and busses, were again circulating in all directions as freely and unham-

peredly as if they had been newspapers lies. The setting sun just peeped through the clouds once or twice, preparatory to bidding the world good-bye, and retiring for the night.

St. John's Wood, a part of London with trees and actors enough to justify the last and to belie the first portion of its name, was now quiet. The ragged torch-bearers who had been piloting timid pedestrians across the streets, thereby earning a 'eap of coppers during the short but, for them, beneficent reign of King Fog, had now disappeared from the surface. Neatly and conventionally dressed, aproned and bonneted young "slavies" were walking, jug in hand, toward the "pubs" for the purpose of obtaining beer in one or the other of its many varieties, eliciting in passing a flattering remark or so from some "swell" on his way to his club, the theatre, or the music-hall. The neighborhood being of the shabby-genteel (less genteel than shabby) persuasion, had settled down to feed the inner man, either at supper or at dinner, according to its "station in life."

On the whole, then, everybody and everything out of doors was now at rest.

So, too, was the scavenger. For the first time since the lifting of the fog he had just once more swept away the lifeless yellow leaves which the wind had scattered all around him on the sidewalk. While the darkness lasts a man literally cannot see his duty; no, not even a p'liceman, let alone a mere legalized beggar in the shape of a street-cleaner, who, unlike the other, gets neither regular pay nor irregular six-pences from such "unfortunates" as may be fortunate enough to possess that popular coin of the realm.

The old scavenger was now resting, his back against the barren apple-tree, his emaciated, not very cleanly shaven, and self-assertedly projecting chin on his right fist, while the left, which supported its fellow, was in its turn leaning on the old broomstick, an honest time-worn implement of the road-sweeping industry, now an integral part of the old man's being.

Thus propped up and "backed" by the tree, he stood there gazing at the stones of



the pavement, holding, one would have thought, communion with them.

For the brief space of one moment he dozed off.

## II

His whole past suddenly arose before his mental eye.

By Jingo, this is queer. Dashed if it ain't!

Here he is young again, young and vigorous, and as good-looking a chap as any in the whole timber-yard.

Hark! What the deuce is this? What a bloomin' noise? Music, by gosh!

"Say, gov'ner, where may them red-jackets be going to? To embark for the Crimea, eh? Well, I am damned!"

This? Why, Soho Square, of course. Any fool knows that. Feels nice to be out of that infernal timber-yard. He is now on his way home. Washed, and kempt, as bright as a new brass button, a regular dandy. But what makes him carry a broom across his shoulder? Queer, ain't it?

And now he is in Regent's Park, among lofty trees and fragrant flowers, beneath a clear summer's sky. Foggy? Well, it was foggy a while ago, but it seems to be July again.

There is Minnie, emerging from behind a cluster of foliage. The glass roof? Oh, yes, it is that funny old florist's hothouse. Kindest man out; never passes you by without giving a poor man a copper. Thank'ee, sir, thanks!

Minnie has come to meet him. He knew she would come, and that is why he made himself look so spruce. Everybody is fond of Minnie. At the dressmaker's where she works they call her "Queen of Hearts." They say the yard superintendent cheats at cards. What a beast!

"Take me home, Jack?"

Should rather think so. He takes her hand. She blushes. Girls will blush anyhow; they are built that way.

Suddenly it has got very dark, and they are in Bethnal Green. What, already? They didn't ride, though; he is quite sure

of that. Here they are, in front of her house, on the doorstep.

“Jack!”

“Yes, dear.”

“Good-bye!”

She fumbles in her little bag, gets out her latch-key, opens the street door, looks around to make sure . . . and kisses him, sobbing all the while.

“Oh, you silly, little goose!”

He notices some egg-shells. He sweeps them away; that's soon done. Somebody gives him a penny. Confound the man, now Minnie is gone!

Damn that policeman! He catches you by the scruff of the neck and drags you along.

“Say, old fellow, you are choking me!” He digs his iron knuckles into a bloke's neck. . . .

That jail is a dreary place, and no mistake about it. Serves him right, though. If she got into trouble through such a mean skunk as that lanky, milk-and-water clerk it was her own lookout. Still any-

body would have knocked down a miserable, blooming wretch who fooled a girl like Minnie, and then threw her up like a squeezed-out orange. . . .

Hang the little rascals! They will mess up the street with orange-peel and the like! He sweeps it away.

"Sorry, but you can't get your job again," says Plank, Timber, and Co., Limited. Don't want no jail-birds, not they.

The work on the underground railway is downright beastly. Tunnelling don't agree with him. Makes a chap drink, too; he does not booze, not exactly; but he drinks more than what is good for him.

My! How she is rigged out nowadays! And she grins all the time; every customer gets a smile with his gin-and-water. Fancy, Minnie a barmaid!

Is this Le'ster Square? Where, then, would the underground be? It's all blooming well mixed up, by gosh! It must be Le'ster Square, for there is the Alhambra, and . . . well, Jack may be a trifle tipsy, but, dash it all, he can see all right. There is Minnie coming out of the Alham-

bra on the arm of a swell. He's got a Scotch plaid over his shoulder. They got into a hansom. . . . Poor Minnie! Her eyebrows are so very black. He wonders if she paints.

"Look, alive, my friend; give us a whiskey, will ye?" Here in New York they call their barmen "bar-tenders," and everything is upside down. Seems an age since he crossed the water. Good pay; but, damn it all, they work the guts out of a chap.

"Hextra-a-a! Hextry spesh-o-ol!" That's the Frenchie and the Prooshians coming to blows. Well, it is none of his business. . . .

Minnie is a . . . Confound her! Still, he would never have come back to England but for her. . . . There, just look, there is a well-dressed, half-drunken woman walking up Piccadilly, who. . . . He could almost swear it was Minnie. Drunk, eh? Well, he's a bit shaky himself.

Days seem ages in Guy's hospital. The nurses are fine girls only they don't sell liquor. What a beast to run his infernal

bike into a bloke's ribs! Might have worked to this day. . . .

"Eh, stop, will yer? Don't ye run away with my broom, don't! ye, blooming idiot! My broom, my broom, help!"

---

He opened his eyes.

There is really no telling how much a fellow can dream in the short space of one second. Talk about electricity, it isn't in it.

The old scavenger looked down at the pavement stones. An impudent northeasterly wind tried to put the tree in a flutter. It shook derisively its branches, as much to say: "try again, old whirlpuff!"

It was getting very dark. An actress came up the road. He knew her. At the corner where he acted the last chapter of his life she used to take the bus on her way to the Adelphi, invariably putting a penny into his hand. Actresses always are kind-hearted, the kindest creatures out.

## III

I stop and look at him as he stands there, leaning against the tree. It seems to have a fellow-feeling for the old man. Just now they are both in the same plight.

The autumn has come for both man and tree. Whatever fruit the summer of their lives had ripened has gone into strangers' hands. Now they are both barren of everything; both looking forward to a long, cold, all-devastating winter, with the only difference that while the tree may live to see another spring, the scavenger's winter will have no springtide to follow in its wake.

Presently he shudders at some thought that has just flashed across his mind. Was it the north-easterly that has, perchance, tickled the terrible wound in his heart — the wound which time has been unable to heal?

Nobody knows. The street-lamp has, no doubt, seen a great deal of him. His friend, the apple-tree, may know a thing or two about him. As to the stones beneath him, he was certainly whispering to them

all the time. But then, you see, a tree in the fall is too dead to tell any tales. The lamp, again, is like some learned men I knew; it lights everybody's path, and is at the same time a very poor observer. While the stones, low and down-trodden as they are, have, as in the case of the poor, long had their senses deadened.

And so it is all a mystery.

I wonder whether he is dead now — that is, whether he is done dying yet. He probably is by this time.



## COMMUNISM A FAILURE

(1901)

The celebration of the Paris Commune held under the auspices of the Socialist League, in the South Place Institute, in London, was a remarkable success. The crowded hall contained a gathering almost picturesque in its composition. Among the speakers were Eleanor Marx Aveling, Peter Kropotkin, William Morris, and Malatesta. The Hammersmith Choir, accompanied on the piano by May Morris, the poet's daughter, supplied the songs of the evening.

With one exception the speeches were listened to attentively, at times almost breathlessly. The exception was in the case of Malatesta. He spoke, of course, with all the fire of the southern branch of the Latin race, but as he did so in his native tongue, and very few people in the audience could

follow an Italian speech, it naturally fell on deaf ears. Deaf ears beget wagging tongues.

It was, then, during the delivery of that oration that in a corner of the gallery a colloquy — in whispers, to be sure — was carried on between two young people of the fair and unfair sex respectively. They hailed both of them, from Russia, the country, let me add in passing, that derived its name from the blackness (implying fertility) of its soil, and might now be so named on account of the darkness of its fate. The man, who was clearly the lady's senior by a few years, could not have been more than thirty. He was tall and slender, with a beard that would have made him the target of jokes among a normally constituted crowd of down-town office boys, and he wore a suit of clothes which rendered him anomalous in a gathering of London workmen, whose knowledge of custom-tailor garments was purely theoretical. The lady I prefer not to describe as she might be among my readers, and would probably rather pass incognita through this story.

The two must have met there by accident.

"You don't understand Italian?" she asked her companion, her glance fixed on Malatesta.

"No," he said, and smiled as he added: "Except such hackneyed expressions as 'sotto voice,' which the mode of our present conversation would seem to suggest."

A short pause ensued, then the lady said:

"It's quite an age since we two met for the last time, isn't it?"

"Fully nine years now, I think."

"Yes, she said, and it was, as you doubtless remember, in that rickety old restaurant on Rue Glacière in Paris. By the way. There was precious little quiet talk in those days, as far as I can remember. Our discussions were always very heated, and sometimes reached the boiling point—"

"Particularly," he interrupted her, "that memorable one which nearly led to a fight in single combat between Gradsky and myself. All about Marx's theory of surplus value, too."

"About that only?" she said, at once

regretting the query, and still more the tone of voice in which it escaped her.

“Well,” said Valdimir, “a great deal has, no doubt, happened since then, but I may as well tell you, now that we can discuss the matter as dispassionately as if it were the third Punic war, that I disliked Gradsky then in a general way.”

“Not because of —”

“Your liking for him? Perhaps not. I can’t tell.”

“I hope not.” She busied herself dandling her eyeglass cord, and supplemented that remark by saying epigrammatically: “That is, however, how it generally happens, for when hostilities break out the ‘casus belli’ — that is what you call it, isn’t it? — is always found to be some exalted principle?”

“You are severe, So —”

“Yes, Sophy, by all means. My husband does not hear you, and would not mind it if he did.”

“You have fine children, I am told.” He was anxious to change the subject,

which was evidently becoming painful to him.

“Oh, yes,” she said, “and as they grow older I gradually realize more and more clearly how inefficient moral precepts are in comparison with surrounding influences. All my plans for the children’s education seem to go to pieces one by one. The school will probably ruin them altogether. As it is they all get crushed between the sidewalk acquaintances and the servant girl.”

He involuntarily glanced at her as he muttered:

“So you keep —”

“A servant? Why, of course. One cannot help it, though it certainly does seem queer when the past is recalled. And while I am at it, let me tell you a peculiar experience of mine. When I first married —”

Valdimir slightly coughed, but she unheedingly went on: “I for some time could not reconcile myself to the idea of employing any —”

“Help, as they hypocritically call it in the States,” he chimed in.

“Exactly,” she said, “but then Vladimir came —”

“That is your first born, I suppose?”

“Yes.”

“Was it your husband who chose the name?”

“It is immaterial. Anyway, when he was born, and as we were already tolerably well off, my husband insisted on my taking a servant into the house. Well, I had no less than three girls in the space of three months. They simply would not stay with me, though I treated them as well, as only a woman imbued with socialist principles could have done. When I went to the Register office for the fourth, I mentioned the circumstance to the woman at the desk, and what do you think did she tell me?”

“Give it up.”

“Why, that I would never keep a girl in the house as long as I made them take their meals at the family table, instead of letting them eat by themselves in the kitchen. The poor creatures, it appears, could account for my ‘strange conduct’ in no other way than

that I was trying to see that they did not eat too much."

"No!" he exclaimed.

"It is a fact, and it just goes to show —" She was on the point of launching some elaborate theory in relation to that episode, when an outburst of cheering in the hall, followed by another more vigorous and more prolonged, put a stop to their conversation. Malatesta was through, and the chairman, in a stentorian voice, had announced "our comrade, William Morris."

When the meeting was over, Vladimir consented to escort her home, which was at Enfield, in the north of London. Taking the train at the Broad Street station, they got into a second class compartment, which they had most of the time all to themselves.

It was she who broke the silence.

"So you have decided to go back to America?" she asked.

"Yes," he replied; he bent his head a little forward, and said with a slight tremor in his voice:

"And since I may not have another

chance to speak to you, permit me to ask just one question."

"Do," she said, and, somehow or other, the matting of the carriage floor suddenly developed into a most fascinating sight for her.

"At one time," the young man said with a visible effort, "I was under the impression that you favored my advances. That was some time before I had that row with Gradsky. Now was it pure imagination on my part?"

She made no answer, and gazed still more fixedly at the floor. A minute or so elapsed in silence, and then he spoke again:

"Was it, Sophy?" he asked.

"No," she replied.

"Then what was it that brought about your sudden change of manner toward me? So soon, too, after Gradsky's last visit to you?"

"It was," she said, with a badly suppressed sigh, "that I invited both of you, and he alone came. You then lived together, and seemed as inseparable as the —"

"Siamese twins," he helped her out, as



she got somewhat mixed on the time-honored simile.

"For politeness sake," she went on, "I invited him, too, but it was you —"

"It was me that you —"

"That I wished to see."

Vladimir's face mirrored all the colors of the rainbow as he muttered:

"Well that is extraordinary. I thought just the reverse, judging from a remark that Gradsky made on that occasion."

"You were wrong, Vladimir. I—I longed to see you. I did not think there was any room for a misunderstanding. At the supreme moment you failed me. He came. You didn't. The rest is now of no consequence."

Valdimir seemed to turn over those events in his mind.

Suddenly, as if seized with a fit, he uttered a short, convulsive laugh which contained at once a comedy and a tragedy. She was startled.

"How strangely you behave," she said, looking up to him.

"Well," he replied, his voice ringing

with a merry-tragic tone akin to that laugh, "you say you invited both of us. I told you how I interpreted that 'both.' Still I should have come along with him. But at that time we were very poor, so poor, indeed, as only Russian students in the Latin quarter of Paris ever could be. There was, no doubt, a good deal in that poverty of a delightfully idealistic nature. Whatever little we were possessed of was as clearly common property as if we had been man and wife. All the same we were very hard up, and so, when the question of going to see you arose, it was decided that he, the one, as we thought, who was really wanted, should alone go."

"I fail to see why —" said she.

"You do, Sophy?"

He glanced at her rich attire, as if her opulence might afford an explanation for her want of understanding in matters relating to the communism of the poor, and then, with another sardonic laugh that well nigh choked him, he muttered:

"Why, in those days, Sophy, we two fel-

lows had only one pair of shoes between us!"

\* \* \*

Around Whitsuntide of the same year a marked copy of a San Francisco paper reached her, in which she found the following lines over her friend's signature:

Deathless love, hope ever new begetting,  
Heeding neither barriers, space, nor time;  
Love its very sighs to music setting,  
Thriving on its groans and fretting,  
Making hell and heaven rhyme,  
Is sublime!

## THE GROWLING EDITOR

(1899)

You are on the wrong track entirely, my dear reader. The hero of the following short sketch is not as you imagine, a crusty, sulky, disagreeable, old dyspeptic; a man in perpetual dread of budding poets, prosaic bill collectors, of his wife and her temper, of thin skinned, litigious persons whom he, in the discharge of his duty towards humanity, may have tackled in his most brilliant, most "newsy," but, alas! not widely circulated paper; a man whose proclivities are in the direction of money-making, while his achievements invariably result in his contracting new debts and chills, with his spine and his creditors ever reminding him of the old ones.

He is of a different kind altogether. Never jump at conclusions.

\* \* \*

At about 7 o'clock in the morning one day early in June, 1876, a young couple was seated on a bench in the public gardens adjoining the University of Koenigsberg, in Prussia.

The man, who, seemed to be on the right side of thirty, had a careworn, dreamy look about him, the bearing of one who has had a military training, and a pair of hands that betrayed the workingman long out of a job. To look at him you would have taken him for one convalescent after a prolonged illness, just discharged from the hospital. As a matter of fact, he was just out of prison, a circumstance which accounted for the bundle, tied up in a kind of shawl, which his fair companion had taken possession of by way of relieving him of it.

As to the woman, who was evidently some five or six years younger than the man and more refined in appearance, she would easily have been recognized by anyone familiar with the various races inhabiting the German empire as a native of Posen, the province of Prussia where Teutonic placidity and Polish liveliness are so beauti-

fully blended in the fair sex. Her demeanor towards her friend was that of a mother who at last had found her long-lost child.

"It is not so terrible as you would imagine," said he, continuing the conversation, which was probably begun at the prison gate; "the jail could not have any terrors for me again."

"But you won't do it, Hans," she said gently squeezing his hand, "I will just take care that you don't, that's all. Write? Of course you will; but you will have to be more careful. But wasn't it a grand article, all the same! I often wondered how you —"

"Could have written it," said Hans, moving uneasily in his seat. "Well, I — but let us drop the subject. I wish, Flora, you had taken a keener interest in the movement, for there are a hundred things I should like to know all about. I have been as much cut off from the world as if I had been in my grave all this year."

"It is horrible! And you will not do it again, you silly boy, do you hear? I won't

have it. But you make a little mistake in thinking that I know nothing about the movement. You imagine I am the same little goose I was when you came back from the French war. I never understood you then, and that's why —"

"Do not cry, Flora," said the man in a somewhat altered voice; "you were then quite right. And when you know all — and sooner or later you will know all," he made a strong effort not to betray his emotion and succeeded in adding, "you will see that I am not by any means over modest."

"But that is just what you are, you big baby!" said Flora while wiping away her tears. "You don't understand your own value. The article was not only dignified, bold, defiant; it was fine writing besides, and everybody admired it. I read it every day since I came here from Dantzic, and I know it by heart. I only wish it had not got you into trouble. That article proves you to be a writer, and, what is more, it shows the wisdom of the comrades in entrusting the paper to you."

Hans looked agreeably surprised.

“You said ‘the comrades’—you are in the movement, then? Since when?”

“Well, since I found out all about you. During the last twelve months I have read a good deal besides your article—but what is the matter with you? How pale you have turned!”

Hans moved away from her a little, and, after a short pause, during which he had evidently formed a resolution, he said:

“Flora, you make a great mistake, and I will not suffer myself to get into your good graces under false pretenses. Let go my hand, Flora; I am not the man you take me for. It just proves that you have not been very long in the movement, for you would, otherwise, have guessed at the truth at once.”

“The truth? What truth?”

“Why, that I was nothing but a growling editor all the time.”

Flora’s lips moved as if to say something, but she did not interrupt him, and he went on.

“You have clearly never heard of such a



thing as a growling editor. Let me explain it to you.

“Our party is young and it is more than any Socialist organization in the world a workingman’s party. Writers of ability are very scarce in our ranks, and not a week passes by but what some editor or another is committed to prison — sent to growl, as the phrase goes. Now, if every one who goes to jail were in reality the editor of his paper, we wouldn’t have at this moment more than half a dozen papers in existence, and so —”

He cleared his throat and, somewhat lowering his voice, continued:

“And so there must be people who, not being writers themselves, would give their names as responsible editors, so that in case of need they —”

“May go to prison for other people’s offenses against the law,” said Flora, the words almost choking her.

“Exactly,” said Hans. “And so you see, my dear friend, I am not at all the great writer you took me for. I am merely —”

He was interrupted by her suddenly getting up and embracing him in defiance of the broad daylight and all the rules of conventionality.

She then sat down again and sobbed, the tree over their heads wondering what it all meant.

For a while they were both silent. Then Hans felt as if he ought to say something.

“You now see, Flora dear, he stammered, that I am not what you and many other fancied I was — I am merely —”

“A hero!” she exclaimed.

## THE KNOUT AND THE FOG

(1893)

It may sound incredible, but I can vouch for the fact that Nellie, when last heard from, had developed a profound admiration for the dense London fog,—that English survival of the ninth plague of Egypt. Now don't shake your head. Read on, and be convinced.

Nellie was a native of Russia. She was born of fairly well-to-do Jewish parents in the old historic city of Smolensk, where you can still see the fortifications erected by Boris Godunoff in the sixteenth century, and where the French in 1812 defeated the Russians under Barclay de Tolly, thus clearing their way to the ancient capital.

Nellie, blue-eyed, blonde, well-shaped, sweet-voiced, was the favorite child in the family, and as such got a good education. She was sent to a grammar-school —

curiously called a gymnasium — for girls, from which she was graduated after a period of six years with honors, though disliked by masters and authorities owing to her somewhat “rebellious” spirit. She had a will of her own. To the Russian official mind such a thing savors of treason in its embryonic stage. Red tape sees in it the germs of Red Terror.

At that time Nellie was sixteen years old. As higher colleges for women were then still in existence in both capitals, she took it into her head to go to Moscow and there to study medicine. Her parents, old-fashioned, though not exactly orthodox people, with a deep-rooted aversion for all new-fangled notions, and particularly for the “women’s independence craze”—so greatly in vogue among the youngest members of the fair sex in Russia—would probably have objected to Nellie’s enterprise, but they were, alas! both dead. Her uncle, a brother of her father’s, who had been her guardian for some years, offered no resistance, and so she left the “old place” for Mother Moscow, the White-House town

with its forty forties of churches, its Kremlin, its Czar-Bell, and what was of more importance than the rest to Nellie, its college for girls. There, in the fall of 1882, she was allowed to matriculate, and to take a course of medicine, having bravely surmounted no end of difficulties before entering college.

For a while all went well.

\* \* \*

Following upon the outrages against the Jews from below, persecutions from above were now in full swing, subjecting the old race to suffering of every kind. The most exasperating form of persecution was the rigid enforcement of the law by which Jewish settlers in the "Interior" of the empire were driven back to the "Pale of Settlement," that is, to the North-Western and a few other provinces which they had inhabited long before Russia annexed them.

The authorities now discovered that Jewesses, while entitled to study, had no right to live in either St. Petersburg or Moscow, where alone such studies could be pursued. Consequently, Nellie, like many others of

the objectionable race, was told to go. The poor girl was thunderstruck. There was to her knowledge but one way out of the trouble; to embrace Christianity. She would never do that. "I am not a hypocrite" she said.

A few days went by.

"Whatever shall I do?" she exclaimed, while talking the matter over with a friend of hers similarly afflicted.

"The same, I suppose, as Minnie and myself," said the other girl, bitterly.

"And that is?"

"That is to take out yellow passports."

"Yellow passports! What do you mean?"

"What I mean? Why, you poor little goose, I mean that we shall get ourselves registered at the — at the Police Bureau as — as prostitutes — They don't mind Jewesses of that class here. For —" The poor girl, who had begun her little speech defiantly, expectorating, as it were, her words, those disgusting words, one by one, now broke down, and sobbed violently. Nellie bit her rosy lips, muttered something in-

articulate and getting up, went away with a determined step.

In a few days she was duly registered a common harlot, free to live under the holy sound of a thousand Christian church bells, pursuing her studies as heretofore entirely unmolested. But she was no longer the same person. At a time of life when woman and love are supposed to be synonymous, Nellie learned to hate, her hatred growing in strength and intensity as one black day succeeded another, and the persecutions of the Jews increased in volume, in their variety and cruelty. However, she stayed at college some six or seven months longer.

\* \* \*

In the spring of 1883, Nellie found herself an object of love. It was a young man of her acquaintance who now offered her his hand and heart. She hardly reciprocated the sentiment but being more than ever in need of a friend, she was glad enough to receive his attentions. It is not at all improbable, either, that Nellie would sooner or later have come to love the young

man she did not dislike, but her first romance was cruelly nipped in the bud. The mail carrier had one morning brought her a letter couched in the following terms:—

“SMOLENSK, May 19, 1883.

“*Dear Niece,*—

Have just received a notice of expulsion. In three weeks from now I shall leave this town a ruined man. You must come home. You are, of course, welcome to a share in whatever may be left to us, but your continuing your studies is, under the circumstances, out of the question.

YOURS, ETC.

“Come home!” she exclaimed, repeating those words in a tone of voice almost terrible for a tender girl of her age. Then, the first shock over, she began to revolve various plans in her mind, finally deciding upon one. “But, said she to herself, *he* must know nothing about it. He might take it into his head to follow me, and I have no right to drag my friends into the whirlpool after me.”

In the midsummer of that year the population of the British metropolis was increased by one poor soul. It is true, the



young woman's heart was broken, but the census man counts folks without in the least bothering about integrity of hearts.

\* \* \*

In London Nellie spent a few years trying to live. She only managed to vegetate. With all her knowledge absolutely inapplicable to anything, and her inability to eke out a regular living of any kind by manual labor, nothing she turned to seemed to prosper in her hands. In turns she worked hard at capmaking, buttonhole sewing, at needlework of almost every other description, at cigarette rolling, even at letter-writing (for illiterate countrywomen); but none of these occupations yielded her, on an average, fully six shillings a week, while gradually destroying her once robust health.

Nellie was soon in a fearful plight. Too ill to work, too honest to steal, too proud to beg, even too proud to apply for temporary assistance in the shape of a loan, she had starvation staring her in the face. With her colorless eyes, her emaciated cheeks, her faded lips, her neglected teeth, and her bending knees, she looked the very

image of wretchedness personified. And the clouds kept gathering very fast. The arrears of her rent had accumulated to a *non plus ultra* extent, and her landlady, herself very poor, at last gave her notice to quit. She was not unprepared for that, and left the house without a murmur.

There was the workhouse, but no Russian Jewess ever went there. What else? Well, the streets and the sky. Alas! The streets in November are inhospitable, and the sky was chilling and terribly unfriendly.

When, after a day's wandering, the night overtook her, Nellie was sitting under the portico of a house in one of the least frequented streets. The rest was a great relief to her, and she was on the point of going off to sleep when she was rudely awakened by a watchful guardian of the public peace, and told to move on. Resigned to her fate she crawled along. A well-dressed young man passed by, glanced at her, and concluded that she was drunk. Having given vent to his feelings by violently spitting on the pavement, he quickened his pace, and soon disappeared in the darkness.

After this Nellie made several fruitless attempts to give her tired limbs a rest, and was half-dead when the merciless night was gone at last.

With a few pennies, obtained at the cost of the last articles of comfort, she managed to keep body and soul together during the next few days; but rest there was none as the cold, angry nights relieved each retiring, gloomy day. Rest came at last, though.

One bleak November night London got enveloped in a dense, black, suffocating fog. No policeman, not even the most lynx-eyed, can then penetrate into the doings of the poor settled on doorsteps in the streets. Nellie slept, having closed her eyes with a fervent blessing addressed to the kind, merciful fog. The same happened on the night following. "Oh, that blessed, blessed fog!" she said. The third night was better still. She slept so soundly that when the stifling darkness at length cleared away, the constable "on duty" found it impossible to rouse her. Nellie was dead.

But Russia was purged of one moral monster, of one Jewess, at all events.

## MALEK'S FRIEND

(1900)

That night — February 17, 1880 — the Communist Workmen's Educational Club, at No. 6 Rose street, Soho Square, in London, presented an unusually lively appearance. The bar-room, never of an evening entirely deserted, was on that occasion crowded, and, strange to say, not so much by thirsty as by inquisitive souls, who, ever since 7 o'clock, had been pouring in, either singly, or in couples, or in small groups. Every time the door was opened the barman, who was also the steward, besides serving on a number of committees, had the same question addressed to him: "Has he arrived?" Whereupon he gave the stereotyped answer: "Yes, He is in the dining-room, right there, on your left."

Among the callers were many persons who had never seen the inside of the old

club-house before, and others who, for a variety of reasons, had kept aloof from it for years. There were also among them ladies of all ages, sizes, races, and complexions, most of them with their best holiday looks on, and some with babies in their arms. Like the men, they were directed by the bartender aforesaid to the room where "he" was to be found, and whither they repaired with all the haste compatible with a sense of self-respect.

The particular "he" in question was a middle-aged, tall, broad-shouldered, severe looking man, who had come on a sort of flying visit from Germany to London. As a Socialist member of the Reichstag — at that time there were not quite a dozen of them altogether — and as one of the party's most effective speakers, both in parliament and on the platform, he always loomed large in the public eye. He, moreover, had been only recently, and for a number of months, the recipient of the Kaiser's hospitality, having had board and lodging free of charge conferred upon him in one of those imperial hotels where they take as much care of you

as if you were a state document. This circumstance naturally lent an additional interest to our friend's unexpected visit.

The dining-room, which was also the reading-room, as the many newspapers decorating the walls conclusively proved, was filled to its utmost capacity when the present writer, late as usual, arrived upon the scene. The general conversation, in the course of which the guest had all sorts of questions pelted at him, was now over, and his attention entirely monopolized by Malek. How Malek, who was among the least known, and, as a Socialist, hardly a man of any account, had managed to get at the lion of the evening in this fashion I don't know. I am, however, inclined to think that he accomplished the feat in the same way as babies, women after a confinement, and invalids succeed in having things all their own way where the strongest men would find themselves foiled. Sometimes weakness spells strength.

"You misunderstand me," I heard Malek say as I entered the room. His deep-sunk, glistening eyes, which brought the

ghastly palor of his emaciated face into bold relief, were riveted on our guest, while his voice had a funereal sound about it.

"The question," he went on, "is not whether suicide is or is not an act of madness, or, as you put it, one committed in a state of mental aberration. We know all about the so-called instinct of self-preservation, and all the rest of it. But that doesn't bother me. What I want to know is simply this: Given a person who is sane enough to foresee that his death would very seriously affect the health and happiness of others near and dear to him, the question is: Has he a right, a moral right, to put an end to his life when that same life becomes a burden and a source of torture to him? Now, then, what is your opinion?"

"Well," said our guest, talking half-reluctantly, "that would to some extent depend on the circumstances connected with the particular case. Now your friend, if I understand you right, is —"

"Hold on!" Malek interrupted him. "Would you have the patience to listen to his story? It is not uninteresting, and I

will tell it as briefly and succinctly as I can."

"Tell it, by all means," said the other, and having ordered another lager and a small Manila cigar, combining in so doing economy with good quality, he composed himself to listen.

"My friend," Malek began, raising his voice with the uncalled for self-assertion of one who feels that he is given a hearing out of mere politeness, "is, like myself, of Hungarian extraction, but born and bred in Germany. When a mere child he lost his father, and was brought up by an uncle of his, who had taken him off the poor widow's hands, as she had to work for her living, and the youngster was an encumbrance to her. It goes without saying that the parting with her son nearly broke her heart, but then, you know, children are frequently a luxury which the women of our class cannot afford. As soon as the boy was old enough to make himself useful, his uncle took him away from school and apprenticed him to his trade. He was a turner. The boy progressed rapidly, and



— what are you looking for? — a match? — here you are — quite welcome — and was in a fair way to begin to earn nice pocket money. Unfortunately, his health, never very robust, was getting poorer every year. When he reached the age of twenty-one it became bad enough to stand him in good stead — it freed him from military service. At that period he, partly for the sake of his health, partly because he wished to follow the example of others among the journeymen workers of his age, set his heart on ‘wandering.’ He dreamed of going into distant lands, often quoting the case of Bebel in that connection, as he was already a Socialist. He had a little money. Neither his uncle nor his mother raised any objections. But an obstacle arose of which he was not conscious until the very day when his mind was definitely made up to pack up his few belongings and to start out on his travels —”

Our guest interrupted him. As a public speaker and, at that moment, the observed of all observers, he could hardly help it.

“ I smell a rat,” said he, “ the uncle had

a daughter, a sweet damsel, blonde and blue-eyed, and so on and so forth."

"Quite so," said Malek, "though you are wrong as to the young lady's complexion, and the color of her eyes, for, if I am not mistaken, she was a dark-eyed brunette. The two had grown up together, and would have passed for brother and sister if they had fought each other often enough to make the mistake more readily acceptable. On rough winter days the boy was sent to fetch the girl from school, while on fair spring and early summer days he sometimes went on that mission of his own accord. The old man considered the care bestowed upon his daughter a little beyond the actual needs in the case, but said nothing.

"When the day of his departure set in there was a quiet little scene in a quiet little corner, with the result that a more or less plausible excuse was invented for the benefit of the uncle, and the journey was indefinitely postponed for that of the cousin.

"My friend was, or fancied himself, very happy for a few months. Presently a disturbance arose — one, too, which he could

never have foreseen. Twice within three weeks, as you all know, the life of the old emperor had been attempted upon, two years ago. Hoedel's attempt did not affect my friend. So deeply was he at that time absorbed in his little love affair that the whole business was something like a fleeting night-vision to him. But when, on the second of June, 1878, Nobiling, too, shot at the Kaiser and seriously wounded him, and the police, having proved powerless to guard against it, tried to make amends for its incompetency by arresting everybody in sight, my friend got into trouble. A reckless remark or so landed him in jail.

“He was not long in ‘preliminary’ detention. His trial took place early in July, and he was ‘thundered’ down for nine months. That day was probably the happiest in his life, little as he may have realized it. To start with, he behaved nobly, eliciting the admiration of his sweetheart, who was in court, her eyes full of tears, and her heart full of love. Then he seemed to be a revelation to himself as he made his short, defiant speech in his defense, in which

he proudly avowed himself a Socialist, and then stated that while he, in common with the rest of his comrades of the Social Democracy, never approved of assassination in any shape or form, he also condemned the system of society which was based on, and sustained by murders and violence.

“As the sentence was being passed on him, he glanced at the darling of his heart, and seemed to find in her fine, loving eyes all the comfort and solace that he needed in anticipation of the long and terrible months to come.

“Towards the middle of September he had a surprise. On the ‘goose-walk’—”

Our guest offered an explanation for the enlightenment of those among us who were not acquainted with the lingo of German prisons.

“The ‘goose-walk’ is what they call there the convicts’ promenade in the prison yard which some of them, under certain conditions, are allowed at stated times. They walk two abreast round and round the yard.”

Malek nodded assent in a very nervous manner, and went on with his narrative.

"On the goose-walk, then," said he, "my friend met a comrade who for a long time had been a close neighbor of his uncle's. As nobody had as yet visited him, he was naturally anxious to know all about the folks at home. The poor fellow received a piece of information which fairly staggered him. The young lady —"

"It's the old, old story," the guest chimed in, "out of sight out of mind, and the fickle fair proved false to the incarcerated swain."

Malek, so far from being annoyed by the interruption, evidently welcomed it as a kind of relief, the recollection of his friend's most trying ordeal in life having had the effect of rendering the narrative a very painful performance. He wiped the perspiration off his forehead and, lowering his voice, he proceeded as follows:

"The thing is even worse than what you imagine, but I don't care to dwell on it. Suffice it to say that the man who supplanted my friend in her affections was already

in full possession of her heart when she faced the poor fellow in court on the day of his trial. During the remaining seven months of imprisonment he hardly took any nourishment, and slept very little of nights. The result was that he left the jail a complete wreck of his former self, and he, as you already know, was far from being a giant in the best of times. Now he is a physically ruined man, sentenced to death by the weakness of his lungs. As he has no work, and is without hope of ever being able to do any, if he got it, he longs for the final drop of the curtain. But there is the old mother —”

At this point a terrible noise out in the street put a stop to all conversation.

“Explosion in the Winter Palace, pa-pa-ar! The Tsar and family nearly killed, pa-pa-ar!”

This was yelled from several lusty throats, owned by newsboys from the neighborhood, who felt pretty certain that they were bringing their wares to the right market. A rush from the room ensued,

and in a minute everybody was reading the latest from the country where the "red terror" was in deadly conflict with the "white terror."

The news, though brief and scanty, gave rise to a long discussion, in consequence of which Malek and his story retreated to the background. Meanwhile the hour for adjourning all talks had set in, and our guest had got into his outlandish overcoat, preparatory for bidding us good night.

Malek stopped him on his way to the door.

"Well," he asked, "what is your opinion?"

The other, his mind full of what had happened at St. Petersburg, stared at him blankly, as he replied:—

"Oh, I don't know. I suppose we shall have more detailed news about it this time to-morrow."

"But I am not talking about that. I want your opinion as to whether or not my friend has a moral right —"

"Undoubtedly — only keep that to your-

self — the Tsar, just fancy, the Tsar and the whole of his family. Good night.”

“Good night,” Malek said.

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Three days later we had a disappointment at the club. The guest was to address a public meeting, and did not appear until after most of the people had left the building. It was nearly midnight when he walked in. His face was very pale and he looked more dead than alive. Nobody cared to question him, and a few minutes elapsed in profound silence. At last, as if waking up from a reverie, he spoke.

“Malek,” he said, “you know Malek, who argued with me — the other night — who wanted my opinion —”

“Yes, yes. Well?” We took him up almost in chorus.

“Well, his friend — he was his friend — and — and he hanged himself this afternoon. What a fool I was —”



## CRANKY OLD IKE

(1902)

Of course, you and I, whose generous, loving and philanthropic hearts are ever on the alert for all that is best in human nature, would, at the sight of him, have heaved a deep, lackadaisical sigh, exclaiming or muttering: "That poor old man!" Not so the young ragamuffins of East Broadway and its tributaries. To them the gray-haired, bent, dreaming and frequently unkempt cloak-maker of Cherry Street was simply cranky old Ike, who was so "orful touchy" that he flew into a passion every time a playful "kid" took some liberty with his whiskers, or burlesqued his mode of perambulation, or called him a Sheeny.

For a long time his shopmates shared the opinion of the boys. As will appear hereafter, their reasons were not exactly the same. Anyway, he was never thought or

spoken of otherwise than as cranky old Ike.

He was fearfully nettled by that epithet. In the Yiddish vernacular, in which he did all his thinking — even when he had come to speak what he in the innocence of his heart called English — the word crank meant disease. It seemed to recall to his mind one terrible winter in Russia, when typhoid fever, aggravated by dire distress, had carried off first his youthful wife, and then, one by one, his three little ones, leaving him a branchless tree that had evidently nothing more to do than to stand and wait for the woodman's axe to be cut off altogether.

\* \* \*

Ike came to this country in 1882, during the first great exodus of the children of Israel from the modern "land of bondage," hardly knowing wherefore or whither he went. He escaped from the lions' den to enter that of the sweater, just vaguely conscious of the fact, and quietly settled down to work long and weary hours for the benefit of a "cockroach boss" and the Singer Sewing Machine Company.

In the workshop he was unpopular because he was exclusive, unsocial, and a good deal too quiet. His redeeming feature was his submissiveness, the result of the almost entire absence of anything like a will. Without bothering to understand the ethics of trade unionism, he belonged to a union when everybody else did, paid dues long after the others had ceased to do so, went out on a strike when one was ordered, paid every assessment without grumbling, marched in all processions, did his full share of picket duty, and was generally all right for a man of his age. The trouble with him was that he clearly had no heart in all this. He went automatically, like a clock, only when wound up. In the minds of his mates there was the suspicion that this subservient tool might with equal ease be used by anybody else, not excepting the boss.

And then he bristled up against every harmless joke, and though usually taciturn enough to be mistaken for a deaf mute, he would at times, like a sleeping volcano, burst out in a rage without any apparent reason for such an outburst. This was the

case every time anybody in the shop perpetrated what Ike took to be an injustice to a fellow workman, or when some gross though innocent lie was indulged in. People naturally felt such interference to be a breach of good Mammon's first commandment, "Mind your own business," to-wit. Thus it came about that the verdict of the urchins was endorsed, and Ike was voted a crank by acclamation.

\* \* \*

Years went by without any perceptible change in the old man's ways, habits, or manners. He aged, though. Toward the spring of 1895 his hair had become perfectly white, his eyesight greatly impaired, and in proportion as the last of his teeth — invalids for a generation — had taken their departure, the wrinkles on his face increased and multiplied. Those who, for lack of a more profitable occupation, at times troubled about him, gradually came to the conclusion that "the old crank was fast going to the dogs."

Partly, however, they were mistaken.

About that time there occurred in New

York City one of those East-Side strikes, which return annually with the regularity of pugilistic encounters in certain Parliaments. A mass meeting was held in Orchard Street, and among the speakers was one old German Socialist, whose calm, sedate, and sincere manner seemed to have made a strong impression on poor old Ike. Not that it was the first speech of the kind he had ever listened to. Nor can it honestly be claimed for him that he caught the true meaning of more than just a few words in each sentence, and, heaven knows, a German sentence can be long enough to test the lungs of a giant. But he was stirred up by it all the same, and was a different man to the end of the final chapter of his life. There is, let me add, reason to suppose that what impressed him more particularly was the part in the eloquent harangue in which the speaker showed that the unsanitary conditions prevailing in the dwellings of the poor render them a sure prey to every contagious disease.

However that may have been, the fact remains that old Ike no longer resembled him-

self. He not only became talkative, but he talked politics, and a good deal of it.

At first nobody took him seriously. Cranky Ike in the character of a political reformer struck people as no less a monstrosity than might have been a Jewish rabbi performing on the high trapeze in a circus. Men scorned the very idea, and the recognized wit in the shop raised many a laugh at the old man's expense, the most popular among the many witicisms being to the effect that Ike had swallowed an alderman. But as time wore on, and the old man's interest in politics, so far from flagging, had actually got more intensified and more keen as election day drew near, the jeers and gibes gave place to a kind of silent amazement.

One day in October, 1895, Ike was sitting at his work when suddenly a thought flashed across his mind, and, nudging his nearest neighbor with the elbow, he blurted out:

"Say, how many of them is there in the Twelfth?"

"Don't understand you."

"I mean, how many voters is there in all?"

"Where?"

"In the Twelfth Assembly."

"You mean in the Twelfth Assembly District?"

"Sure."

"Ask me something easier."

"Ask a policeman," chimed in the funny man of the place, doing it rather timidly.

And the old man collapsed.

That evening a meeting was held on East Broadway, and, as the speakers succeeded each other, poor Ike's heart expanded, his face beamed with delight, and his eyes sparkled as if they had been newly "fixed."

When pay-day came round, and he got his few hard-earned dollars, he felt so young that he thought he ought to invest a little money in new collars. He accordingly repaired to Grand Street, examined half-a-dozen show-cases and store-windows, and came home with a fine double-portrait of Marx and Engels, having decided to buy the collars the following Saturday without fail.

As the month of October set in the campaign was in full swing. Ike devoured every leaflet and news-item bearing on Socialism in general, and the contest in the Twelfth in particular. The prospects looked to him brighter and more encouraging from day to day, and as he lay down of nights he dreamed of Albany, of the Assembly, of the first Socialist State legislator. He saw him enter the House, proud and defiant, a veritable Samson among the Philistines, challenging to battle all and sundry, and carrying aloft the purple banner of justice, and freedom, and — well, yes — and sanitary conditions.

He did not sleep well at all, poor old man, and his health suffered visibly. But he did not mind it. "I never felt better in my life," he would say when anybody upbraided him for staying up late at night after spending the evening, wet or dry, running from one street corner to another to "hear the speeches."

And now the great parade came. He was in it. Rather. His step was almost elastic as he walked in the never-ending



procession to Union Square. The thousands of marchers, the flying colors, the bands of music, and afterwards the fiery speeches seemed to give him a new lease of life. When the parade was over, Ike felt certain that "our man" was going to win in a canter, which meant that the thin end of the wedge was driven in, and the dawn of the new era was near. Why, his children might have lived to see it. . . . Poor little things!

At length election day came. It was an interminably long day. It could not have been longer if another Joshua had once more stopped the sun in Gibeon. And then he had got up several hours before the usual time. In fact, he hardly slept at all the previous night. Who could sleep?

At noon he went into a coffee-saloon on Division Street. People talked at the tables. He listened. When the waiter came around for his order, Ike looked at him vaguely, then waking up to the fact that he was to eat there, he pondered over the matter for a moment, and then, to save time, ordered a "regular dinner." The soup

came and went back almost untouched and the meat was set before him. He had hardly swallowed the first morsel when the talk at the neighboring table turned on the election.

"He ain't got no show," said a well-dressed young man who looked the very type of the fellow with his mind made up to be rich. Ike had a presentiment, and the fork dropped out of his hand.

"What do you mean?" asked the young man's colloquitor.

"Vy, that Sosh'list feller in the Twelfth, of course."

Ike turned deadly pale. He went up to the first speaker, and, in a trembling voice, ejaculated:

"You are a liar! That's all."

The young man got excited, and trouble would have ensued had not the saloon-keeper stepped up to the future Rockefeller and whispered in his ear:

"Dontcher mind him, man. It's cranky old Ike, dontcher know?"

Hostilities stopped right then, but Ike ate no more. He left the place very much

troubled in his mind. A terrible doubt was now gnawing at his heart. Could that "dude" be right? He went out into the street, and bought the Jewish Socialist daily. The editorial was far from reassuring. There was some talk there of succeeding in the end. That wasn't what Ike had come to expect. A cold shiver ran along his back.

Still, he hoped against hope. "The papers," he said to himself, "don't know everything. They make mistakes all the time. And then it is quite possible that the writer purposely talked in that strain so as to make the victory all the more striking when it comes; yes, when it comes. . . ."

At ten o'clock it was all over. The result was known. Ike's man was at the bottom of the poll.

The following morning the old man did not show up at the work-shop. The day after he came, but could not work. Then he disappeared altogether.

## THE PRICE OF FREEDOM

(1902)

After Balmashoff — Hirsch Leckert!

One after another they come and sacrifice their young lives on the altar of Russian freedom.

“Well, my friends,” said some one, as we talked matters over a few days ago, “it is the blood of the tyrant’s countless victims that cries to Heaven for vengeance. The cry being heard on earth, is responded to by the noblest sons, or, as in the case of the Jew Leckert, by the noblest step-sons, of darkest Russia.”

“This,” said I, “sounds, of course, plausible enough, but there is, to my mind, something else underlying the eagerness to do and die on the part of those young heroes. There is an old legend not very extensively known even in Russia, which would explain my meaning better than any words I

could use for the purpose. I have it, done into English, and would read it aloud to you, if you care to hear it."

They composed themselves to listen, and, producing the manuscript, I read what follows:

---

Thrice-nine lands away, in the thrice-tenth kingdom yonder, there lived and thrived a mighty Czar in the olden days of yore.

A powerful monarch was he, stout of heart and strong of limb; wise, though youthful, and withal right terrible when in wrath.

And he took to wife a damsel fair, a beautiful princess, lovely to behold. Her gracefulness was the envy of the fairies, while the lustre of her eyes put to the blush the light of the polar star.

Full many a time the sun rose and set, and many a stream ran down its course as the royal pair delighted in bliss beyond the ken of mortal man.

And now in fulness of time their union was blessed with godlike off-spring, for a

male-child was born unto them, whose countenance mirrored wisdom and power apparently destined to be the wonder of the world.

Great was the joy of the Czar as the feast was spread in the royal hall. Right glad was he as each Barin and Boyarin, after partaking of the choicest viands and the most delicious wines, came up to pay homage to him who was to be the ruler of the land in days to come.

But, alas! the Czar's happiness was soon cruelly nipped in the bud. 'Mid the strains of enchanting music that had roused the spirits of the elder folks, while setting a-whirling in joyous dances the giddy lads with the buxom maidens of the hall, a serpent in human guise whispered something so dreadful in the monarch's ear that it forthwith set ablaze his heart, and the erstwhile happy husband and father now resembled a furious demon. Thus will, at times, peaceful, playful Mother Volga, enraged by a mischievous storm, all of a sudden rise in anger, fiercely smiting her shores to right and left, on ruin and devastation bent.

“Thrice-cursed woman!” thundered the Czar. “Yonder child is not the issue of my loins!”

Anon the guests, as if terror-struck by a raging volcano, quietly dispersed, and the palace, but now full of life and mirth, became desolate, dreary, and dead.

Many a night after this the Czar lay outstretched on his couch which unto him now seemed a bed of thorns, brooding over his fate; while the Czarina bathed her face in tears, pacing up and down in her bower, as might a caged lioness, doomed to an inglorious end.

The Czar at first was hesitating only because he could not devise a death that would be an adequate punishment for the transgression of his royal consort. Then, as his fury abated, better counsel prevailed. The more so, as his former great love for her, who but a little while ago had been his all in all, had begun to plead in her favor, raising doubts as to her very guilt.

In the end, however, he decided to place her fate and that of her infant child in the

hands of Providence, so that, if so it be that she, as she all along protested, really were innocent of the crime laid at her door, then, forsooth, her guardian-angel would protect her and save her from harm.

He thereupon, got her and the luckless infant put in a tub strongly built and well tarred on the outside, and, having furnished them with meat and drink, to the end that they perish not of hunger and thirst, he had them set afloat on the wide, wide sea.

\* \* \*

Soon a tale is told, but not so soon a deed is done.

Moon after moon passed as it was born as the Czarina and the outcast scion of a mighty family remained thus confined within their floating jail, at the mercy of the furious winds and angry waves,

Meanwhile the prince grew not from day to day, but from hour to hour. He soon was a veritable young giant with the strength of a lion, and the sight of an eagle. So big was he now that he could no longer freely stretch his limbs within the narrow vessel.



Anon, my good sirs, a terrible thing came to pass.

"I must have more elbow room, I must have freedom!" the son one day said unto his mother, and so saying, he made a herculean effort to burst asunder the vessel.

"For God's sake, stop!" cried his terrified parent.

"Mother, I must," quoth he, "I will, and must be free!"

"But, oh, foolish child, thou canst have no liberty, leastways not unless thou payest for it with thine own sweet life," said the luckless woman, rising as if to stand up betwixt her child and his death.

"I will have my freedom, mother dear, whatever the cost! I will have a taste of it now that I am big, come what may!"

"But, my darling, thou wilt surely perish, thou wilt die, my soul!" pleaded the poor woman, mother-like entirely oblivious of her own danger.

"Sweet queen," said the lad, "one short moment's freedom is worth more than a whole long lifetime in bondage and dis-

grace. I must have air, and light, and liberty, untrammelled, limitless! I will free myself, and die!"

He freed himself and died.

## THE MAN LAZY ON PRINCIPLE

(1893)

Mike — his patronymic nobody ever knew — was not exactly a compositor by trade. He was a man who occasionally did an odd job in the lower-class East End printing places in London, but only when there was absolutely nothing more to pawn, and nobody to borrow from, “probably never to repay,” as he used to say with characteristic frankness. He was rather undergrown, slender, sleepy-looking, with a sallow complexion and deep-sunken eyes. His temper was very uneven, and he was known to be both “mild and bitter,” Socrates and Xantippe in the space of five minutes. As a general rule, however, he was the most good-natured young fellow in the Tower Hamlets.\* Young, did I say? Well, I am afraid it was a somewhat

\* A part of London: the east side.

hazardous assertion, for you can never tell the age of the poor. They often have a careworn look as soon as they are breeched, and, on the other hand, frequently preserve a healthy color in the face and a bushy head of hair long after their contemporaries of the middle-meddle-muddle class have lost their ruddy cheeks and become as bald as eggs.

He was very talented — was Mike. He not only could give the average compositor odds at typesetting and beat him, but was a good hand at almost anything you cared to mention. He had the making of a comfortably-situated artisan in him, only he had a deep-rooted aversion for all work and preferred constant need, with occasional employment, which was his lot, to constant employment, with occasional need, which is the lot of other exceptionally skilled workmen. He was well read, too.

\* \* \*

“I am,” he once told me, in the course of a long debate I had with him, “an idler on principle, and a worker through compulsion. I hate the drudgery of the workshop. Even

if work were not, as it generally is, overstrained and underpaid, I would still detest it."

"But, then," I remarked, "you are poor."

"Well," he replied, "it depends on what you call poor. He who earns four shillings a week and needs five is not half so pinched as his neighbor who, with a weekly income of four pounds, lives at the rate of ten. Besides, man alive, what is a breakfast or two gone without, or a dinner eaten by proxy once or twice in the course of a week, compared with a spin of idleness lasting through a whole delightful month? Why, a mere nothing."

"*Dolce far niente!*" I interposed, probably murdering the Italian words in my pronunciation, and accompanying the slaughter with a smile like a genuine civilizer of Asiatics.

"Just fancy," he continued, visibly annoyed by the interruption, "going to bed with the consciousness of having spent a day in gaping and gazing while strolling through the busy streets like a true free-man: then sleeping undisturbed by an over-

filled stomach or a brain racked with cares, and the nasty dreams engendered by the one or the other! Then to get up late next morning, often late enough to skip the very breakfast one has to do without, and to go out into rain or sunshine, as the case may be, with the prospect of another day's bliss of idleness. It's glorious! And then, you see, there is the splendid fun of being stared at by every policeman on 'my beat' and to be 'shadowed' as somebody 'wanted' by every cross-eyed, ill-favored, ill-disguised Scotland Yard man, whom I often purposely pretend to avoid so as to have the indescribable pleasure of being followed for days at a stretch."

"You wax quite eloquent!" I remarked, "but between you and me and the lamp-post, don't you sometimes give the guardians of property good cause to suspect you?"

"Never!" he most emphatically said. "You must be a simpleton to suppose that I would go to the trouble of stealing, or robbing on the highway, or forging checks, or coining! Why, typesetting,

beastly, hateful typesetting, which I have to resort to when I find that 'Uncle' had got possessed of all of my movable belongings, is not half so irksome or laborious as any of the criminal professions. I dare say, I might — under different circumstances — have turned my mind to promoting bubble-companies, or forming syndicates, or going on the Stock Exchange, which, besides requiring very little physical exertion, have the additional merit of being comparatively safe. I might have done that, I say, but then, you see, my needs are limited, and I have, moreover, no taste for crime in any shape or form."

"By Jingo!" I said, "you speak like a book."

"Like a bad one," he replied, a little self-complacently, and then, relapsing into a sadder mood, he added. "I have set up just enough of these cursed things in my time to talk like one."

"You were going to say something else when I interrupted you."

"Nothing, except that you ought to have

had the good sense to understand that with a conscience ill at ease I could never have been the happy man I now am."

"But," said I, determined to probe his queer philosophy to the bottom, "are you — really and truly, now — are you happy?"

"Well," he answered, half-reluctantly, "not, perhaps, absolutely so; nobody is under the present conditions of society."

That expression rather tickled me, but I let him talk on.

"Both," he said, "the ever-needy and the ever-greedy are perpetually hungry, and therefore never contented.

"It is the case," I could not help chiming in, "of little Oliver Twist here and King Solomon's horseleech there."

"And, broadly speaking," he continued, "humanity is composed of those two classes. Then, you know, there can be no true happiness so long as 'to have' is everything and 'to be' next to nothing; while, in fact, nobody does strive to be anything except for the purpose of having something. Again, self-respect is, I im-



agine, an essential condition of happiness, of real happiness (as distinguished from the base-metal finery of the drawing-room), and pray, who is there alive now between the four points of the compass who, in his heart of hearts, could possibly respect himself, unless he be as conceited as a London sheriff and as stupid as a gravestone? Who? Surely not your politician, who hoodwinks his fellows, nor those same fellows who submit to the process. Surely not the task-master who grinds 'his' people, nor the people who put up with the grinding, evidently taking it to be a kind of black cholera which defies all remedies, or else considering the greatest evil of the greatest number part of the plan on which society is built. Who else? Surely not your lawyer, whom I would not describe, as I may need him, nor your physician, who thrives on disease, nor your philanthropist, who donates the chaff and keeps the wheat, nor your tradesman, both behind the counter, and in the professional chair, nor —"

"Hold on," I said, "we have heard that

lay before. What is it that you are driving at?"

"Why," he replied angrily, "I merely want to show you that as no one nowadays can honestly respect himself, there would be one reason the more why there can be no absolute happiness. But — and now I come to answer your question — within these limits I think myself a happy man. My shabby coat, my aged trousers, my weatherbeaten cap, my ventilated shoes, my lodgings — at times air-tight, at others too airy — my scanty and not ever-ready meal, my very faults — and, Heaven knows, they are many and weighty — never bother me. I do not even worry if, before allowing myself to go into harness for the sake of a bite or a sup for to-day and to-morrow, I have to apply to a friend for a tanner or a bob,† . . . because they are always welcome to what little I can spare, provided they do not put me to the trouble of 'giving,' which is an exertion like 'receiving,' and more disagreeable, as it savors of beneficence."

† A sixpence or a shilling.

"To judge," I remarked, "from your way of talking, I should take it that you are a bit of a Socialist."

"You are wrong there," he replied quickly, almost snappishly. He was silent for a moment, and then continued, speaking with abated animation:

"Not, mind you, that I find it difficult to accept the tenets of Socialism, or that I fail to see the very inevitableness of its advent as a system of society soon to replace the wild scramble we live under; but the way I look on such things is briefly this: A wine barrel is not the same thing as a barrel of wine, and there is no duty on names. To label oneself this, that, or the other is about as easy as lying. Unless, then, a man does something to justify his name, title, or sobriquet, he might as well style himself Rameses II as Socialist. Now, doing, acting, and working for any cause whatsoever is not in my line."

Having said which, Mike gave me to understand that he had talked himself out of breath, and I left him to enjoy a well-earned rest.

## ECK-KE

(1899)

The sweet voice now was silent, and as the vibrations of the last notes were dying out, several persons of both sexes surrounded the owner of that marvellous vocal instrument whose sounds had just been caressing their ears, while filling their hearts with love, and hope, and faith.

Among those who came up to shake hands with the tribune of the people was a middle-aged, stumpy, poorly-clad individual with a pair of small, grey, sly eyes, a narrow, almost idiotic looking forehead, a peculiarly shaped mouth devoid of front teeth, and a nose flatter and shorter than the average run of East Side noses. A beard of fully ten days' growth served to render his face well-nigh repulsive, while the absence of collar and tie clearly demon-

strated the man's contempt for conventionalities.

He offered the speaker a cold, fishy hand, doing it in a manner rather obtrusive, if not bold.

"How do you do?" said Mr. Debs, who possesses the art of pronouncing those usually politely-meaningless words in a way to make you feel certain that the man addressing that inquiry to you is in all seriousness anxious to know the state of your health, sincerely hoping to hear from you that you are really and truly well.

Before the other could have found time to say anything in reply, he added:

"What is your name, Comrade?"

The man did not answer, and there was a half-subdued titter among the bystanders. Debs could not help noticing that there was something wrong, and looked a little puzzled.

What was the matter with the man? Nothing. He was neither bashful, nor unmannerly, but simply dumb.

It was the deaf-mute baister Eck-Ke, commonly so called because those two sylla-

bles were the only ones the poor fellow could articulate. It was deaf Silence that came to pay homage to eloquent Speech.

What, you wonder, was he, of all people in the world, doing at that meeting of ours?

Well, he was listening without hearing so as to repeat without talking, which is the plain, unvarnished truth. As, however, you look a little dubious, let me give you the information I am possessed of, and you will judge for yourselves.

\* \* \*

Eck-Ke is a Russian Jew. He came to this country early in the eighties, along with the others, after the first great anti-semitic onslaught on Jews and decency. He must have been quite young at that time.

His physical defect is the result of an accident which occurred when he was three years old. At the time of writing he is the father of a family, and very proud of his children,—with good reason, no doubt. As a sober, industrious and skilled workman he seems to earn as much as anyone else in his trade, and his folks are naturally greatly attached to him. He is, and

always has been, a strict union-man, aye, and an intelligent one, to boot. He not only takes considerable pride in his union card, but thoroughly understands both the immediate and the ultimate aims of unionism. '

Several years ago there was a sort of general strike in the East Side tailoring trade. It goes without saying that Eck-Ke held out to the bitter end, and the end, let me say in passing, was very bitter indeed. Seeing that strikes are almost always begun with more enthusiasm in the ranks than cash in the treasury, they come, among our people, unfortunately only too often to such an end. But Eck-Ke on that occasion did more than hold out; he won his spurs.

The great event of his life happened in this wise:

During a parade or something Eck-Ke saw a wrathful policeman with pro-capitalistic propensities make free with his club much to the discomfort of a number of heads. Others probably saw it too. Unlike them, however, Eck-Ke could neither hear nor speak, so he acted. A scuffle en-

sued. Our friend was worsted. All the same outraged Authority had to be avenged, and he was arrested. When the case of the People versus the deaf-mute was decided in favor of the former, Eck-Ke went to jail for four calendar months.

\* \* \*

His attitude toward the Socialist movement is that of a sympathizer. There is no direct evidence of his ever having been officially connected with any party, but he takes a livelier interest in all our family scraps than many an old timer, which is, perhaps, not exactly to his credit.

With all his sympathy for Socialism he is a union man first, last and all the time. As such he is ready to fight, and that to the last ditch, as the phrase goes, any party or individual in the Socialist movement whom he considers antagonistic to organized labor, no matter how organized. It is for that reason that he opposes unity with the S. L. P., and every time the subject is broached he gives vent to his feelings by making as wry a face as if he had swallowed a tum-



blerful of vinegar, accompanying the horrible grimace by a shrill, drawn out yell.

There is a café on Grand street which is frequented by the progressive element of Jewish young men in process of Americanization. Eck-Ke may be seen there almost every evening in the week. He comes for a chat, as it were: some of the boys can talk to him.

When there is anything of interest in the papers, he takes them home, and gets his children to tell him all he wants to know about. Once in full possession of the facts he comes back to the café, ready for an argument and woe to him or her who ventures to disagree with him.

\* \* \*

Such a thing as a religious Socialist among the younger generation of Russian Jews is indeed a *rara avis*. If there be an exception to the rule, it surely is not our friend Eck-Ke. He not only is decidedly irreligious, but perfectly "outspoken" about it. More than that, he occasionally even goes out of his way to tease his pious

brethren, as the following well-authenticated little story would go to show:

One day Eck-Ke was accosted on the street by a very excited individual in search of a "tenth man" needed in order to make up a prayer-meeting (a "minyan," requiring at least ten men; women, children, deaf-mutes, etc., not counting). So eager was the man to get somebody looking more or less like an old-fashioned, religious Jew, that he fairly dragged Eck-Ke into the house, where the services were to be held. In an instant Eck-Ke had taken in the situation, and inwardly chuckling, he obeyed the summons, and soon formed part of the congregation, well aware of the fact that his ignorance of the ritual entirely incapacitated him from completing the requisite number. Prayers over, he set his fingers to work, and with the broadest grin on his face, he made the trick plain to the nine good and pious co-religionists.

Take him all in all, Eck-Ke is undoubtedly a character.

## ELIAKUM ZUNSER

JESTER, PRINTER, AND YIDDISH BARD

(1902)

Toward the end of the sixties the Lithuanian city of Kovno, in Russia, could boast of but few booksellers. One of the two whose stores had a more or less modern complexion, the books therein being of a poiylot character, was a red-haired, undersized, weak-eyed, weak-everything-elsed individual, an almost bodyless little man. His store was hidden away in a quiet nook of a large, at times malodorous courtyard, out of sight, as it were. In Russia, you see, both the Jew and the Book feel safest in the shade, both of them being tabooed; to some extent, anyway.

This man's customers were mainly school boys, youngsters, that is, out of the old-fashioned "Cheder" who were allowed a

two years' course in the public school, where they got a knowledge of the three R's and a proper understanding of the beauties of autocracy.

I was one of the number. I used to go there to feast my eyes on that wonderful collection of books in all languages, which the man had on his shelves, in an apology for a trunk with its lid half gone, and in the capacious pockets of his overcoat — a garment which occasionally did duty for a bed-cover and a window blind. I was then about twelve years old, a budding fabulist, with Kryloff as my model, and a partner about my own age to "make up" the story, he, in my opinion, being a great authority on wild and domesticated animals. In his company I often spent a delightful half-hour gazing at the books, full of reverence not only for themselves, but for the very dust enveloping them, and even for the spider on the top shelf, who, without any undue interference, busily manufactured textile fabrics in his own ingenious way, probably thankful for the continued ab-

sence of cobweb machines owned by some cobweb trust.

One summer evening as my friend and I were in the bookshop discussing a plot for a new fable, we were surprised to hear the proprietor hum a sweet, typically Jewish tune. We stopped talking and listened. The man raised his voice and continued a song about a flower that was once full of fragrance and life, guarded from evil winds, admired by all, but now detached from its native soil, despised and neglected, blown into the gutter by a furious gale. Poor, outcast Jewish race!

The bookseller's weak eyes, never dry on general principles, now filled up to the extent of looking like crying, but that stage was not reached.

"Whose are the words?" he plainly read in our faces, for he said:

"What, you don't know? Why, it's one of the songs of Eliakum the badchan, the famous merryman who sings at the richest weddings, and gets fabulous sums of money for his rhymes."

"For example?" my friend asked, who in his mind was then perhaps trying to figure out the market value of fables as compared with wedding rhymes.

"Well," said the bookman, "I can't tell, but I know of one case where he was offered as much as twenty-five roubles to come here from Wilna."

"Railroad fare paid?" my friend further asked.

"I think so," said the other; "third class, of course!"

"'Tis wonderful, as I am a Jew!" ejaculated my partner in (the clearly much less remunerative) fable business."

I was silent. I was, in fact, dumb-founded. Here was, in the first place, a badchan, a fellow, socially a degree lower than a fiddler, spoken of by a man like the bookseller, one who usually weighs his words, as "Eliakum," instead of "Eliakum-ke," that is without the affix "ke" denoting contempt when applied to an adult. That same badchan, moreover, writes not only funny rhymes, but poems,

and people recite them, sing them. Whoever heard of such a thing?

The bookseller had, however, a still greater surprise for me. While I was ruminating about it all he had gone up to the place where the overcoat aforesaid was summering, and pulled out from the apparently bottomless depths of the pockets a large pile of promiscuous printed matter. After a long search, in which his nose took as much of a part as his weak, watering eyes, he produced a small booklet.

"Here," he said, "are some of Elia-kum's songs in print. Cheap, boys, very cheap."

He named the price. It was only a few kopecks, but I was just then financially somewhat embarrassed, having only a week or so before invested a little fortune (about a nickel, in American money) in a cheap paper edition of Kryloff's fables. But it was not the money part of the thing that kept me absorbed in thought at the sight of the booklet. It was the idea, the preposterous idea of a badchan-fellow's writings

being printed, published and sold, yes, sold, just like any other respectable publication, and that by a man who handles the Russian poets, Zschokke's novels, and the choicest Hebrew books! And now, as if to cap the climax, the bookseller informed us that the print I was looking at was only one of a series, published in Wilna since 1861.

"Is that possible!" I felt like exclaiming, but the piece of information having literally taken my breath away I said nothing.

A week or two later I raised funds sufficient to become the lawful owner (I insist on the adjective, it is important when you talk of books) of a couple of Eliakum Zenser's publications.

In 1871 something happened that most forcibly brought back to my mind the Jew bard and his songs.

The news reached us in Kovno that the cholera, then raging in Wilna, had wiped out of the Book of the Living three of Eliakum's children; that he fled from grim death to Minsk, but, on the way, the fourth and last child and his wife had succumbed.



This tragic incident reminded us of the existence of the sorrow-laden, heart-broken singer who was still obliged to exhilarate people entering into the bonds of matrimony; to go on writing songs, dipping his pen in his still bleeding wounds, and then setting his words to music by way of turning wails and sighs into harmonious sounds.

“Here of three children a father bereft,  
Buries the last one, Death seemed to have left  
Him, and as this comes to pass, he in his plight,  
Seeks from his cruel fate refuge in flight.  
Four little darlings gone; beautiful, sweet,  
Lovely beloved ones, bright and so neat,  
All in five days devoured, all in their graves  
Leaving me shipwrecked, a plank tossed by  
waves.”

And in spite of the ungainliness, the uncivilized look and sound of the “vulgar Yiddish,” we shed tears as we listened to the bitter-sweet song of the Job-tried singer.

Some thirty years later I was privileged to entertain Mr. Zunser as a visitor at my house. I then for the first time met him face to face, and in the course of the even-

ing he was kind enough to recite the very poem from which I quoted (hastily done into English) the above few lines.

I learned at that time a great many details with regard to his highly interesting career. The singer, it appeared, had to turn printer in this practical matter-of-fact country; the heavy leaden type having proved more serviceable in procuring his daily bread than the airy flights of the most fanciful muse.

Of course, he had been writing, too, all these years, and not only a great deal, but things that in some respects were vastly superior to his earlier efforts. His vocabulary was still rather poor, his rhythm still faulty, although hardly noticeable when sung. He had enlarged his vocabulary by adopting many Slavonic and Anglo-Saxon words, while his rhymes still sounded more like the jingle of the old-time badchan than anything else. Notwithstanding all this, and whatever else might be urged against Mr. Zunser's lyrical effusions, you need read only such of his poems as "The Aristocrat," "The Immortal People," "To the Stars,"

“The Nineteenth Century,” “My feelings,” in order to realise that you have to deal with a true poet, one who, perhaps, lacks a language, through which to give suitable expression to his thoughts and feelings, but who is a poet all the same. Unlike Raphael, for whom it is claimed that he would have been a painter even if he had come into this world without hands, Mr. Zunser would in all probability never have written a line without the use of words, but he is undoubtedly a poet, of the kind that are born, not made, whatever his shortcomings.

The main burden of his riper productions, of which the few above-mentioned are probably among the best, is a protest, reiterated over and over again, directed against “assimilation,” against national self-effacement, even against free thought, inasmuch as it may lead to the weakening of the national bonds among the Jews. He goes so far as to regard the persecution to which the Children of Israel are subjected here and there as a sort of blessing in disguise; he sees in it all the hand of the national guardian angel, who employs this, in the opin-

ion of some of us, somewhat peculiar method for the preservation of the purity and the integrity of the race. It need hardly be pointed out that the only thing new about this is the forcible, in some places beautiful, way Zunser has of putting it.

It is safe to say that had he, in addition to his powers of observation, his quiet humor, his good heart and depth of feeling, enjoyed a systematic education, he would have developed into a sort of Jewish Béranger. As it is, he lacks, of course, to say the least, the great Frenchman's polish, but he is for that very reason a truly Jewish bard.

THE BLUES VERSUS THE REDS,  
BEING SUGGESTIONS OF LAWS AGAINST THE  
ANARCHISTS, DRAFTED BY A GOOD  
CITIZEN.

(1901)

The blues, that's what is the matter with us just at present.

The Reds are at the bottom of it all.

The Reds being dark red, we are troubled with blues which are dark blue, very dark blue, more dark, in fact, than blue.

The Blues then, it is clear, have to fight the Reds.

The situation demands the adoption of drastic measures.

I, therefore, respectfully submit a few such measures, trusting that they will be amplified, and so amended, as to fully meet the requirements in the case.

In order to facilitate the universal understanding of the following laws against the

Reds, I deemed it proper to divest them in many instances of the legal phraseology. Should they, however, as I hope they will, be adopted and placed on the statute book, the learned profession will, no doubt, so rephrase and redraft them, as to make them duly obscure, and properly unintelligible to the lay mind.

Here is the draft aforesaid in its present crude shape.

ANYBODY OR ANYBODY ELSE: —

Whether high or low or a church-beadle;  
 Whether masculine, feminine or neuter;  
 Without distinction as to race, creed,  
 color, dye, real or false teeth, hair or profession;

Whether whiskered, bald-faced (not bold-faced), long-haired or pig-tailed;

Whether in or out of his, her or its wits, senses or anything that may pass for, or be regarded as, such;

Whether in or out of office, be it sacred or profane, be it national, State, municipal, district, janitorial, mercantile, educational, journalistic (or otherwise impudent),

street-cleaning, home, foreign, permanent or temporary; with or without reward, pay, compensation, emolument, reguerdon, recompense or remuneration; no matter whether in the shape of salary, wages, fees, sops, persequisites, tips, bribes, hush-money, solacium, railroad passes, theatre passes, grants, franchises, divorce-court-admission-tickets, votes, name-handles, chairmanships, or compliments (as to youth and beauty) in the case of spinsters, ladies in general, and aging bachelors of no arts;

Whether they be gifted with speech or be mute, or a cross between the two, if, that is, they be diplomatically constituted persons;

Whether silver-tongued or brazen-faced, whether quiet, noisy, whistling, muttering or barrell-organically musical;

Whether they be policemen or, on the contrary, watchful people; handwriting experts or rather adverse to perjury as a trade;

Whether in or out of love, single or plural, free or encumbered either with mothers-in-law or counsellors-at-ditto, with borrowing brothers or worrying lodge-

brethren, with too frequent triplets, unmarketable poems, unbusinesslike scruples; with bibliomania, dear, i. e. costly friends, and other things or beings of the same nature, character, kind or description;

Whether they believe in free love, chained love, love in anticipation of a valuable death, love on the installment plan, love saleable to the highest bidder, love in exchange for a title, love for domestic use or foreign exportation, love platonic, histrionic, operatic, leg-high-up-ic, mormonic, morganatic, poetically constant, or, on the contrary, real love; love with or without regard to and for gastronomy and dyspepsia, to and for soup cooked with or without thrilling dime-novels;

Whether they be smokers, chewers and coughers, or persons who expectorate for the fun of the thing;

Whether they be afflicted with a mania for pictures or drawings representing either landscapes, nude live stock, or pure Comstock in fact, any but watered stock;

Whether they make a living, or speeches, or money to burn, or burnings for money,



or fools of themselves, of matches (parlor, kitchen or diamond, settlement-girt safety matches), or anything else calculated to either give light or cause a (conjugal) explosion in a house;

Whether they be store-keepers, score-keepers, game-keepers, park-keepers, book-keepers, saloon-keepers, or, in a general way keepers of all they can lay hands on:—

---

Now all these persons, both home-grown and imported, naturalized and denaturalized, carnivorous, herbivorous, omnivorous and humble pie eaters, will henceforth come under the following laws, rules, regulations, restrictions and ordinances, to wit:

I. All Anarchists, whether they be such or not, are to be swiftly and ruthlessly exterminated.

II. Under the designation of "anarchist" come all those who are commonly called "reds," irrespective of their professions. (Harvard may remain crimson, provided the philological faculty unequivocally declare in writing that there is a distinction between crimson and red, and that there is, further-

more, no organic relation between crimson and crime.)

III. Everybody will be taken to be a red, i. e., a dangerous person in an embryonic stage, who shall be found wearing a red button, a red shawl, a red necktie, a red ribbon, or a red nose, he, she or it being unable, (in the case of nasal rubicundity, that is) to prove to the satisfaction of the authorities by means of a sworn affidavit of no less than three saloon-keepers, that he, she or it, as the case may be, has acquired the red nose aforesaid in a legal way.

IV. Anybody red in the face will have to satisfy the police that he, she or it, has come by such redfacedness through nothing but excessive drinking, or the reading of some politicians' biographies, or a pugilistic slap in the face, or a perusal of the Police News, of certain divorce proceedings, same being low-life-triangles in high-life-circles, or from some other cause equally natural and, therefore unobjectionable.

V. If caught, reds may be lynched as if they had been blacks, lawlessness against

the lawless being lawful though technically lawless.

VI. Henceforth each and every immigrant must bring along with him, her or it, a certificate of good behavior from the old country, proving beyond any manner of doubt that he, she or it had in his, her or its native place been a good and faithful subject; had never been to any political meeting of a subversive kind, had never called anybody "comrade," had never belonged to any trade union, had taken part in no strike (except by way of betraying rebellious strikers), had been a church member, had gone to a Sunday school when a youth, and had denounced to the powers that be every revolutionist within his, her or its cognizance.

VII. They would, furthermore, have to prove that they had no connection with either Polish Insurrectionists, or the Paris Communards, or English Chartists (dead or alive,) or Irish Fenians, or Russian Nihilists, or Italian Carbonari, or German Social Democrats, or Austrian Reichsrath rowdies, or Spanish Carlists, or European malicious

detractors of Chicago canned beef, or any other dangerous malcontents.

VIII. They would also have to satisfy the authorities that they never read the early writings of Tennyson, and Swinburne, or the mature writings of William Morris and one G. Herwegh, or any other poetry or prose of a seditious nature, more particularly the treasonable poems of the notorious Shelley, and certain deviltry of Robert Buchanan.

IX. Any pregnant woman landing on Ellis Island or elsewhere, shall be kept in quarantine until such time as she may give birth to the foreign conception. Should the child appear to the authorities suspiciously red in the skin, or too much of a squealer, thus giving signs of a discontented disposition, or manifest an objection to swaddling clothes, thereby betraying a proneness to an inordinate degree of freedom, or rebelliously kick in the washtub, or otherwise behave in a manner incompatible with good, lawabiding citizenship,—in all such cases both mother and child are to be sent back to Europe, the United States Government paying

the return passage, and charging same to "Statue of Liberty, Maintenance Account."

X. Open air meetings to be strictly prohibited, except when called by bona fide Republicans, Gold Standard Democrats, thoroughly sterilized and disinfected Populists, the Salvation Army, Prohibitionists of the "horrible example" variety, soap-selling fakers, a genuine dead horse in the street, as well as in the case of juvenile bonfire worshippers, or of "curb" stock brokers, of a house on fire, and of an arrested youngster who may have purloined a loaf of bread, naturally causing an assemblage of indignant honest people.

XI. Poles, Italians and Peter Kropotkin are not to be allowed to land at all. Italians whose declared place of destination be Paterson, N. J., must be searched, divested of all weapons (including suspicious looking penknives, corkscrews and metal toothpicks,) and sent back to Europe before their arrival in this country.

XII. Nobody shall be permitted to sell, vend, give, barter, present, transfer, send, forward, hand, convey, dispense or deliver

any books, booklets, leaflets, pamphlets, tracts, circulars, appeals, manifestoes, handbills, programmes, papers, journals, magazines, annuals, manuals, almanacs, reviews, or periodicals of any and every kind, either printed, lithographed, typewritten, handwritten, or otherwise published, made known, written out, either in longhand, shorthand, or in any other way, in English or in any other language, dead or alive, which may contain either openly or implied, insinuated, hinted, or by way of allusion, matter savoring of rebellion, disobedience or disregard for law and order, its guardians and officers, legislative, executive and detective.

XIII. In all school books the phrase in the Declaration of Independence proclaiming all men to be born equal, as well as all phrases about liberty and happiness and all the rest of it to be expunged.

## A PERSEVERING WOMAN

(1908)

### I

Lost in admiration, I stood outside the Tonhalle, in Zurich, Switzerland, watching the formation of that memorable parade which, in the afternoon of Sunday, August 6, 1893, followed the inaugural session of the third International Congress of Socialists and Trade Unionists. Old Sol behaved splendidly, providing, as he did, as much light as the most exacting could desire, without "taking it out of us" in undue perspiration. The Lake, too, was delightful. While as transparent as a professional politician's philanthropy, only a good deal purer, it was quietly frolicking with the mountain breeze that had evidently come down with the set purpose of taking part in the jolly gathering of the nations.

All the time the procession was form-

ing. As these lines are being penned, I fancy I am witnessing the whole glorious scene over again.

Here, for instance, is the detachment of the sturdy sons of Labor, all in plain, but clean, almost uniform attire, marching up under the strains of Rouget de Lisle's immortal hymn, carrying the banners of their various trades, each head erect, each step elastic.

They pass by. They take their stand somewhere, and are succeeded by another legion. It is the militia. What, in the name of thunder, are they doing there? Well, Vogelsang, Comrade Vogelsang, you know, is the chief commissioner of the police, or something akin to that, and the militia-fellows are in our ranks by his orders, as brothers in arms. It is a capital joke, isn't it?

They, too, pass along. There is something else. It's the children, bless their little hearts! Here they are, some four hundred of them, all in white, with red sashes around their waists, walking, like their elders, four-abreast, led by a sweet lit-



the marshal, a 14-year-old girl. She wears a Phrygian cap, and carries a purple banner, looking the very incarnation of the triumphant Social Revolution in miniature.

Now they, too, are gone. Their place is taken by a promiscuous crowd of citizens, visitors to the Congress from different Swiss and foreign cities, and others, who soon form an orderly detachment, and join the procession.

Who comes next? Why, the delegates, to be sure. See them arrive, the representatives of nineteen nations, among whom there are the Germans conscious of their victory at the polls a few weeks ago, and the French conscious of victory a few weeks hence. They are gathering into one solid mass, and as I look at them, I hear Swinburne say:

We mix from many lands,  
We march for very far;  
In hearts and lips and hands  
Our staffs and weapons are;  
The light we walk in darkens sun and moon and  
star.

and again:

O nations undivided,  
O single people and free,

We dreamers, we derided,  
We mad blind men that see,  
We bear you witness ere you come that ye shall  
be.

All the same they, the delegates, though the heroes of the day, are probably the cheapest lot in the show. Some have only just arrived in the city and have been pressed into service before they had time to get a wash. Others have travelled all night and look fatigued. A good many seem to be novices in this kind of thing, as they come from countries where the only kind of processions allowed by the authorities is the last escort of friends to the place of eternal rest,—the place of freedom unclaimed and equality uncontested.

Now they, too, are organized into a solid body. I have my eyes on them, all the time thinking of the little darlings.

I am to join those others, but I do not seem to realize the fact. I feel more lost than Alice ever felt in Wonderland. I stand there and dream.

Presently there is a gentle tap at my shoulder. I am startled at first, but the sur-

prise turns out to be a very pleasant one. There is a familiar sound in the words:

“Say, Edward and Will Thorne are to bring up the rear as marshals. Let us two march between them. We Jews ought to stick together.”

It was poor Eleanor Marx who spoke. She was grinning all over her face, and as happy as possible. By “Edward” she meant, of course, her husband, who only a few years later was to be the cause of her untimely death.

We got into line. She was talking all the time, now and then taking notice of a jest on the part of her husband, sometimes answering a question put to her by Thorne, but allotting to me most of her attention, as I had touched upon a topic always near to her heart: the life of her father — of Karl Marx, whose daughter she not only was, but deserved to be.

After a while she said:

“Not to forget. This morning after the close of the session, I was looking out for you, but you were gone. There is a coun-

trywoman of yours here in Zurich who is very anxious to be introduced to you."

"What sort of a woman is she?" I asked.

"A very peculiar one," Eleanor said, "she struck me as being either a little deranged in her mind, or a spy. She is very pretty, though, and has already attracted a good deal of attention."

Pretty women as spies were then to some extent in vogue. It was the latest move of the Russian government in dealing with Nihilism abroad. I knew of at least one case in which a Russian refugee in Switzerland, a learned man, too, was victimized by a female detective.

"Do you know what she wants with me?" I asked.

"No," she said, "I tried to find it out, but she fought shy of me. . . . Look! Here are the children again. Aren't they just lovely?"

The procession was formed in a kind of a zigzag, and was so arranged as to enable the various detachments to see one another. Every now and then one of them met another marching parallel with it, only in an

opposite direction, whereat there always was great cheering, fraternizing, and mutual salutations.

“How soon do you expect to see her?” I asked Eleanor when the children had entirely disappeared from view.

“Hardly before to-morrow afternoon,” she said, “she will probably look me up in the hall as soon as the morning session is over.”

That session turned out to be a stormy one, and by the time the hour for adjournment was reached I had almost forgotten all about the mysterious lady. During the afternoon, the novelty of the situation having somewhat worn off, I not only thought of her again, but once or twice even looked around for her in the part of the hall which was reserved for the press, but was occasionally invaded by daring outsiders, persons who, for aught that I knew to the contrary, might have been dabbling in fiction, but certainly not of the kind which is published as news. She was not there. The only representative of the other sex discernible in that portion of the hall was the fa-

mous Vera Zassoulich, the lady who in 1878 had shot at Trepoff, the chief commissioner of the St. Petersburg police, was tried by a jury and acquitted, with the result that the government never again submitted a similar case to a dozen "benighted idiots" from the people.

Eleanor, as one of the translators (the delegates had the choice of English, French and German, every speech being rendered into two other languages) was busy most of the time, and she could only be approached during recess or in the evening. This, however, was by no means an easy matter, as she was always in great demand.

And so the whole week passed by without my hearing, to say nothing of seeing, anything of the fair unknown.

At noon on Saturday, August 12, Congress was closed, old Frederick Engels, to the great surprise of most of us, suddenly appearing on the platform to make the closing speech, and receiving an ovation which was probably the most enthusiastic he ever was accorded in the whole of his long and fruitful public career. For the afternoon

an excursion to the island of Ufenau was planned, and duly carried into effect. We went down by steamer, ever and anon cheered from the shore by hundreds of working men and women who had come out from work-shops and factories to have a look at the delegates. We had, both on the way and on landing, what the romantic girl would describe as a "lovely time."

On the island, as the English delegation congregated for the purpose of getting photographed in a group, I met Eleanor and found at last an opportunity to exchange a few words with her. My mysterious countrywoman was the "first order of business."

"She is here on the grounds," Eleanor said, "but you had better wait till we are on the boat again. There I will easily spot her, and bring her up to you as soon as I see her. She is evidently waiting to catch you alone."

On the steamer, however, I again lost sight of her, of Eleanor, I mean, and was soon an active participant in an animated discussion relating to something that had taken place during the week. Things were

getting very lively when somebody right behind me exclaimed in an undertone: "What a charming woman!" I turned round, and glancing in the direction the admirer of the beautiful was looking out, I made sure I had at last met the mysterious lady.

She would have struck you as a woman still young who was charming without being beautiful. The shape of her chin, the cut of her mouth, her somewhat stern look, and nervous manner made it perfectly clear to you that you were face to face with a strong, perhaps headstrong, determined and excitable woman. She spoke in short, crisp sentences, at times so laconic as to recall to your mind Alfred Jingle Esquire of Pickwickian fame.

The preliminaries over, she told me her story.

## II

It began, it appears, in 1877. As a motherless girl of barely sixteen, Amy (for that was her name) came with her sick father to Koenigsberg in Prussia. In that



town there lived at that time a famous surgeon, the son of a still more famous one, who was almost worshipped by Polish and Lithuanian Jews, though himself a German and a gentile.

Amy's father was successfully operated upon, but was not to be moved, not out of town, at least, for several months. All that time Amy nursed her father during the day, and was relieved by a trained nurse in the evenings.

The old man being well to do, she could afford to spend her leisure hours in theatres, at concerts, and wherever else pleasure of one kind or another was for sale. Of all this, however, she soon began to tire, and she was overjoyed when someone of her acquaintance suggested public lectures. More than that. She was to hear something about Socialism.

In Russia she managed to find out just enough concerning the new Gospel to make her curious about it. She, therefore, eagerly seized the first opportunity to listen to a learned discourse on the subject, albeit the lecturer by no means was one of those great

orators whose fame had reached her native Byalistock. And she was really disappointed. The talk, forsooth, was fiery enough to suit her temperament, but prosaic, and entirely different from what, in her opinion, a socialist talk had to sound like. Still, after the lapse of a fortnight or so, she went again.

This time it was a man of science, Professor Moeller of the Koenigsberg University, who was to smite the Socialists hip and thigh. He certainly did his best, and the adherents of the attacked party looked pretty crestfallen as the discourse was brought to an end amid the rapturous cheers of our opponents.

In the discussion that followed the lecture a tall, handsome young man got up, and the tables were turned before he uttered his third or fourth sentence. He fairly "wiped the floor" with the great scientific luminary, assailing and effectively pulverizing the professor's supposedly most invulnerable stronghold, his ancient history, Spartans and all. The effect was dramatic in the extreme, and the scientist's somewhat lame

reply only served to emphasize the Socialist victory.

The young man, without knowing it, carried away little Amy's heart as a trophy of his passage at arms, of that David-Goliath encounter, while she herself hardly realized the departure of her heart. Like many others, she went up to the speaker and shook hands with him, not suspecting the gravity of her position until she read in the local paper that her hero had left for Berlin, whence he had come to Koenigsberg on a flying visit.

\* \* \*

Returned to Russia, the old man had a relapse and died. Amy who came into quite a little fortune, was placed under a guardian. With his consent she went the following summer to Berlin, ostensibly to study medicine or something. By dint of a most diligent search, taking in several visits to the socialist daily paper ("Die Berliner Freie Presse," of which John Most then was the editor in chief) and all public meetings accessible to young women, she at last found the man who had run away with her heart.

They soon renewed their acquaintance, each finding the other mentally grown out of all proportion to the time since elapsed. Amy now looked physically also much riper, even than her age. They came nearer and closer to each other every time they met. At this stage Cupid took a hand in the game, and Amy decided to try and arrange matters with her guardian as soon as she got back to Russia. Meanwhile, and for a while, all was bliss and happiness.

“For a while”—for two reasons.

In the first place the gag-and-muzzle law against the Socialists, as a consequence of the two attempts on the old Emperor's life, got things in general very much mixed. Five “responsible” editors of the Berlin daily above mentioned were now in jail, and every Socialist known either as a writer or as a speaker had the sword of Damocles visibly suspended over his neck.

Secondly, because the Frenchman is right. He, I mean, who in plain defiance of all that the poets from time immemorial have said and sung, maintains that there is in reality no such thing as mutual love; that what gen-

erally happens is what I am going to put in a separate sentence. Of every two people in love one loves, while the other suffers himself or herself to be loved.

The latter seems to have been the part played by Amy's young friend.

"He came one evening," Amy went on excitedly in her narrative, "and told me we must part. He protested his 'undying' love for me, but . . . well, there were many 'buts.' I was too young. Worse still, I was too rich. Also too pretty. Would take no mean advantage. Wouldn't lay himself open to suspicion that he was after my money. Then that Minor State of Siege. Berlin will soon be under it. There will be expulsions galore. May be something still worse. Couldn't allow me to share in it. Dares not do it. Against his principles.

"I said nothing. Was even too proud to cry. Got nearly choked with sobs, but maintained control. Wonder how I managed it. But I did. We parted."

Her conqueror retreated. As she was talking I thought I saw Moscow in flames, and Napoleon beating a hasty retreat leav-

ing behind him his erstwhile coveted conquest. Well, it was not he who set fire to it, was it? What a pity, all the same!

### III

The steamer, meanwhile, reached its Zurich landing, and we all went ashore. I invited her to join our little circle in the evening, which she did, and in the course of the few hours I spent in her company I got out of her the rest of her story. This was accomplished not without difficulty, and by snatches, as we were considerably interrupted during the evening.

And to start with I put to her a question which the reader must have had on the tip of his tongue all the time.

"Your story," I said to her at the first chance I got, "is beyond doubt very interesting, but I fail to see why you tell it to me."

"Well, she said with something like the suspicion of a smile on her lips, a sane person would have begun by such an explanation. The fact of the matter is, I expect you to help me. That's why I took such pains

to find you. That's why I waited till congress was closed and your labors over; I wanted to have you in the proper frame of mind. You can help me."

"Help you do what?" I asked.

"Help me find him," she said.

"What makes you think I can?"

"I'll tell you. You are a countryman of mine, you are an active Socialist, and you have worked, for a few years, I understand, among German-speaking people. Moreover, you left Germany about the same time that he did, like him, too, being expelled under the new law. You see, I have your record pretty correct, haven't I?"

I nodded assent.

Proceeding, she informed me that she knew him to be somewhere in or about London. Considering that I had uninterruptedly lived in that town for about 14 years, I should be able to do for her what hardly anybody else could do.

Without exactly sharing her opinion regarding my fitness for the service she desired to assign to me, I promised to do the best I could, provided I knew what she her-

self had done by way of locating him in the British metropolis.

She then informed me that between 1879 and 1889 she had been in London three times, on one occasion staying there fully six months.

"I visited," she said, "every Socialist or radical haunt; attended every lecture; took part in every parade; was at every trade-union meeting held in public; found out all I could about the personnel of every progressive newspaper; acquired a thorough knowledge of the German and French quarters; took meals in every restaurant and cook-shop around Fitzroy Square, Tottenham Court Road and all over the East End; frequented the British Museum reading room; spent hours and hours in the Soho Square Club.

"I did more. Rain or shine, I went two or three times every week to the big railway stations. Kept watch on all incoming suburban trains in the morning. Watched trains to suburbs in the evening. More than once I fancied I spotted him. Illusions."

Her eyes filled with tears as she uttered



the last few words. She looked embarrassed, as if ashamed of the tears.

"What," I asked her, "makes you so sure that he is in London at all?"

"That's beyond doubt," she said, "for I saw him there."

"You did, did you?"

"Yes, once. Caught sight of him sitting on the top of a 'bus going west. Six or seven months ago. Followed first impulse, and ran after it. Soon realized futility of it. Might have beckoned to conductor to stop 'bus when it passed. Was startled. Left undone most natural thing there was to do. Then it was too late."

"Now what, pray, can I do for you?" I asked her, placing the accent on the "I."

"Well," she said hesitatingly, "when you come back to London you might look up a few people whom I can't go and see myself. Can't for a variety of reasons. One of them is my sex. By no means the most important reason, though. Will you do it?"

"Why, of course!" I answered.

"Thanks, ever so much!" said she.

We then arranged that I should write

to her to Zurich as soon as I had any news for her.

\* \* \*

For a month or so my endeavors were entirely fruitless. As a consequence I had nothing to communicate to my new friend when answering her frequent, though short letters. Despairing of me, she came to London. Many more weeks passed by without our united efforts showing any results.

One day she looked me up at my office. A glance at her was enough to indicate an important turn in her fortunes. She seemed to be out of breath.

"Have a clue!" she exclaimed as soon as she regained it. "Studying directory, as usual. Happy thought flashed across my mind. His name is easily translated into English. Am sure he has done it. Wants a veil drawn over his past. Common thing among political refugees here."

She must have read something sinister in my eyes, for she added almost pleadingly:

"Oh, he is surely still an honorable man, whatever his present occupation . . ."

Of course, I did not gainsay it.

We started out on a new quest, following up her clue. She turned out to have been successful at last.

As we reached Drury Lane, where we were to find our man, she got very excited.

"Listen," she said, "never divulge his name to anybody. I have a foreboding. 'Sylvester H.' is my Sylvester. But keep it all to yourself."

"What shall we do?" I asked her.

"It's just luncheon time. Let us go into the restaurant across the street. He takes his meals there. I will recognize him at once. Heavens! Hope it is not he . . ."

"You hope not?"

"I hope not, no, I hope not . . . though I don't think it possible . . ."

An hour later she was sitting on a bench in Regent's Park, broken-hearted, poor girl.

The vanquisher of Professor Moeller kept a shop now in London, kept a pawn-shop.

Before parting from her I thought it my duty to say a few words of consolation. She seemed to ignore my existence. I proffered my hand as I said good-bye. She took it, vaguely looked into my face, then in a tone

that baffles description, accompanied by something like a cross between a laugh and a cry, she muttered:

“My poor, fatherless child!”

THE END



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